TWO WAYS OF

DYING FOR A HUSBAND.

I.

DYING TO KEEP HIM,

OR

TORTESA THE USURER.

II.

DYING TO LOSE HIM,

OR

BIANCA VISCONTI.

BY N. P. WILLIS, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "PENCILLINGS BY THE WAY," "THE SLINGSBY PAPERS," "MELANIE," &c. &c.

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N. ESTERQUEST

TO

Miss Mary Russell Mitford,

WITH

THE HIGHEST ADMIRATION FOR HER DRAMATIC GENIUS,

THIS PLAY IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

775699

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DUKE OF FLORENCE.

COUNT FALCONE.

TORTESA—*an Usurer.*

ANGELO—*a young Painter.*

TOMASO—*his Servant.*

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ISABELLA DE FALCONE.

ZIPPA—*a Glover's daughter.*

Other characters—a Counsellor, a Page, the Count's Secretary, a Tradesman, a Monk, Lords, Ladies, Officer, Soldiers, &c.

PREFACE.

The following Drama was produced last year at the National Theatre, New York, by James H. Wallack —himself playing Tortesa. To his most admirable personation of this character, and the care and skill with which it was brought out under his management, the Author feels that he is indebted for its flattering and signal success in his own country. At the moment of publication, Mr. Wallack is about to appear in it at the Surrey Theatre; and for its success, as far as the Actor can insure it, the Author has no fears. To the later tribunal, of the Reader's judgment, he commits it tremblingly.

London, 12th July, 1839.

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TORTESA THE USURER.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.

[*A drawing-room in Tortesa's house.*]

[*Enter Tortesa, followed by Count Falcone.*]

TORTESA.

Come in, Count.

FALCONE.

You're well lodged.

TORTESA.

The Duke waits for you
To get to horse. So, briefly, there's the deed!
You have your lands back, and your daughter's mine—
So ran the *bargain!*

FALCONE, (*coldly.*)

She's *betroth'd*, sir, to you!

TORTESA.

Not a half hour since, and you hold the parchment!

A free transaction, see you!—for you're *paid*,
And I'm but *promised!*

FALCONE, (*aside.*)

(What a slave is this,
To give my daughter to! My daughter? Psha!
I'll think but of my lands, my precious *lands!*)
Sir, the Duke sets forth—

TORTESA.

Use no ceremony!
Yet stay! A word! Our nuptials follow quick
On your return?

FALCONE.

That hour, if it so please you!

TORTESA.

And what's the bargain if her humor change?

FALCONE.

The lands are your's again—'tis understood so.

TORTESA.

Yet, still a word! You leave her with her maids.
I have a right in her by this betrothal.
Seal your door up till you come back again!
I'd have no foplings tampering with my wife!
None of your painted jackdaws from the court,
Sneering and pitying her! My lord Falcone!
Shall she be private?

FALCONE, (*aside.*)

(Patience! for my lands!)
You shall control my door, sir, and my daughter!
Farewell now! [*Exit Falcone.*

TORTESA.

Oh, omnipotence of money!
Ha! ha! Why, there's the haughtiest nobleman
That walks in Florence. *He!*—whom I have bearded—
Checked—made conditions to—shut up his daughter—
And all with *money!* They should pull down churches
And worship it! Had I been *poor*, that man
Would see me rot ere give his hand to me.
I—as I stand here—dress'd thus—looking thus—
The same in all—save money in my purse—
He would have scorn'd to let me come so near
That I could breathe on him! Yet, that were little—
For pride sometimes outdoes humility;
And your great man will please to be familiar,
To show how he can stoop. But halt you there!
He *has* a jewel that you may not name!
His *wife's* above you! You're no company
For his most noble *daughter!* You are brave—
Tis nothing! comely—nothing! honorable—
You are a phœnix of all human virtues—
But, while your blood's mean, there's a frozen bar
Betwixt you and a *lady*, that will melt—

Not with religion—scarcely with the grave—
But like a mist, with *money!*

[*Enter a Servant.*]

SERVANT.

Please you, sir!
A tradesman waits to see you!

TORTESA.

Let him in! [*Exit Servant.*
What need have I of forty generations
To build my name up? I have bought with money
The fairest daughter of their haughtiest line!
Bought her! Falcone's daughter for so much!
No wooing in't! Ha! ha! I harp'd on that
Till my lord winced! "My bargain!" still "my *bargain!*"
Nought of my *bride!* Ha! ha! 'Twas excellent!

[*Enter Tradesman.*]

What's thy demand?

TRADESMAN.

Ten ducats, please your lordship!

TORTESA.

Out on "your lordship!" There are *twelve* for ten?
Does a lord pay like that? Learn some name sweeter
To my ears than "Your lordship!" I'm no lord!
Give me thy quittance! Now, begone! Who waits?

SERVANT.

The Glover's daughter, please you, sir!

[*Enter Zippa.*]

TORTESA.

Come in,
My pretty neighbor! What! my bridal gloves!
Are they brought home?

ZIPPA.

The signor pays so well,
He's well served.

TORTESA.

Um! why, pertinently answered!
And yet, my pretty one, the words were sweeter
In any mouth than yours!

ZIPPA.

That's easy true!

TORTESA.

I would 'twere *liking* that had spurr'd your service—
Not *money*, Zippa, sweet! (*She presents her parcel to him, with a meaning air.*)

ZIPPA.

Your bridal gloves, sir!

TORTESA, (*aside.*)

(What a fair shrew it is!) My gloves are paid for!
And will be thrown aside when worn a little.

ZIPPA.

What then, sir!

TORTESA.

Why, the bride is paid for, too!
And may be thrown aside, when worn a little!

ZIPPA.

You mock me now!

TORTESA.

You know Falcone's palace,
And lands, here, by Fiesolè? I bought them
For so much money of his creditors,
And gave them to him, in a plain, round bargain,
For his proud daughter! What think you of that?

ZIPPA.

What else but that you loved her!

TORTESA.

As I love
The thing I give my money for—no more!

ZIPPA.

You *mean* to love her?

TORTESA.

'Twas not in the bargain!

ZIPPA.

Why, what a monster do you make yourself!
Have you no heart?

TORTESA.

A loving one, for you!

Nay, never frown! I marry this lord's daughter
To please a *devil* that inhabits me!
But there's an *angel* in me—not so strong—
And this last loves you!

ZIPPA.

Thanks for your weak 'angel'!
I'd sooner 'twere the 'devil'!

TORTESA.

Both were yours!

But for the burning fever that I have
To pluck at their proud blood.

ZIPPA.

Why, this poor lady
Cannot have harm'd you!

TORTESA.

Forty thousand times!

She's noble-born—there's one wrong in her cradle!
She's proud—why, that makes every pulse an insult—
Sixty a minute! She's profuse in smiles
On those who are, to *me*, as stars to glow-worms—
So I'm disparaged! I have pass'd her by,
Summer and winter, and she ne'er looked on me!
Her youth has been one tissue of contempt!
Her lovers, and her tutors, and her heart,
Taught her to scorn the low-born—*that am I!*
Would you have more?

ZIPPA.

Why, this is moon-struck madness.

TORTESA.

I'd have her *mine*, for all this—jewell'd, perfumed—
Just as they've worshipped her at court—my slave!
They've mewed her breath up in their silken beds—
Blanch'd her with baths—fed her on delicate food—
Guarded the unsunn'd dew upon her skin—
For some *lord's* pleasure! If I could not get her;
There's a contempt in that, would make my forehead
Hot in my grave!

ZIPPA, *(aside.)*

(Now Heaven forbid *my* fingers
Should make your bridal gloves!) Forgive me, Signor!
I'll take these back, so please you! *(Takes up the parcel again.)*

TORTESA, *(not listening to her.)*

But for this—
This devil at my heart, thou should'st have wedded
The richest commoner in Florence, Zippa!
Tell me thou wouldst!

ZIPPA, *(aside.)*

(Stay! stay! A thought! If I
Could *feign* to love him, and so work on him
To put this match off, and at last to break it—
'Tis possible—and so befriend this lady,

Whom, from my soul, I pity! Nay, I will!)
Signor Tortesa!

TORTESA.

You've been dreaming now,
How you would brave it it in your lady-gear;
Was't not so?

ZIPPA.

No!

TORTESA.

What then?

ZIPPA.

I *had* a thought,
If I dare speak it.

TORTESA.

Nay, nay, speak it out!

ZIPPA.

I had forgot your riches, and I thought
How lost you were!

TORTESA.

How *lost?*

ZIPPA.

Your qualities,
Which far outweigh your treasure, thrown away
On one who does not love you!

TORTESA.

Thrown away?

ZIPPA.

Is it not so to have a gallant shape,
And no eye to be proud on't—to be full
Of all that makes men dangerous to women,
And marry where you're scorned?

TORTESA.

There's reason there!

ZIPPA.

You're wise in meaner riches! You have gold,
'Tis out at interest!—lands, palaces,
They bring in rent. The gifts of nature only,
Worth to you, Signor, more than all your gold,
Lie profitless and idle. Your fine stature—

TORTESA.

Why—so, so!

ZIPPA.

Speaking eyes—

TORTESA.

Ay—passable.

ZIPPA.

Your voice, uncommon musical—

TORTESA.

Nay, *there*,
I think you may be honest!

ZIPPA.

And your look,

In all points lofty, like a gentleman!
(Aside) (That last must choke him!)

TORTESA.

Youv'e a judgment, Zippa,
That makes me wonder at you! We are both
Above our breeding—I have often thought so—
And lov'd you—but to-day so more than ever,
That my revenge must have drunk up my life,
To still sweep over it. But when I think
Upon that proud lord and his scornful daughter—
I say not you're forgot—*myself am lost*—
And love and memory with me! I must go
And visit her! I'll see you to the door—
Come, Zippa, come!

ZIPPA, *(aside.)*

(I, too, will visit her!
You're a brave Signor, but against two women
You'll find your wits all wanted!)

TORTESA.

Come away!
I must look on my bargain! my good bargain!
Ha! ha! my *bargain!* [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

[*The Painter's Studio. Angelo painting. Tomaso in the fore-ground, arranging a meagre repast.*]

TOMASO.

A thrice-pick'd bone, a stale crust, and—excellent water? Will you to breakfast, Master Angelo?

ANGELO.

Look on this touch, good Tomaso, if it be not life itself —(*Draws him before his easel.*) Now, what think'st thou?

TOMASO.

Um—fair! fair enough!

ANGELO.

No more?

TOMASO.

Till it mend my breakfast, I will never praise it! Fill me up that *outline*, Master Angelo! (*Takes up the naked bone.*) *Color* me that water; To what end dost thou dabble there?

ANGELO.

I am weary of telling thee to what end. Have patience, Tomaso!

TOMASO, (*coaxingly.*)

Would'st thou but paint the goldsmith a sign, now, in good fair letters!

ANGELO.

Have I no genius for the art think'st thou?

TOMASO.

Thou! ha! ha!

ANGELO.

By thy laughing, thou would'st say *no!*

TOMASO.

Thou a genius! Look! Master Angelo! Have I not seen thee every day since thou wert no bigger than thy pencil?

ANGELO.

And if thou hast?

TOMASO.

Do I not know thee from crown to heel? Dost thou not come in at that door as I do?—sit down in that chair as I do?—eat, drink, and sleep, as I do? Dost thou not call me Tomaso, and I thee Angelo?

ANGELO.

Well!

TOMASO.

Then how canst thou have genius? Are there no marks! Would I clap thee on the back, and say good

morrow? Nay, look thee! would I stand here telling thee in my wisdom what thou art, if thou wert a genius? Go to, Master Angelo! I love thee well, but thou art comprehensible!

ANGELO.

But think'st thou never of my works, Tomaso?

TOMASO.

Thy works! Do I not grind thy paints? Do I not see thee take up thy pallette, place thy foot thus, and dab here, dab there? I tell thee thou hast never done stroke yet, I could not take the same brush and do after thee. Thy works, truly!

ANGELO.

How think'st thou would Donatello paint, if he were here?

TOMASO.

Donatello? I will endeavour to show thee! (*Takes the pallette and brush with a mysterious air.*) The picture should be there! His pencil—(*throws down Angelo's pencil and seizes a broom*), his pencil should be as long as this broom! He should raise it thus—with his eyes rolling thus—and with his body thrown back thus!

ANGELO.

What then?

TOMASO.

Then he should see something in the air—a sort of a

hm—ha—r—r—rrrr— (you understand.) And he first strides off here and looks at it—then he strides off there and looks at it—then he looks at his long brush—then he makes a dab! dash! flash! (*Makes three strokes across Angelo's picture.*)

ANGELO.

Villain, my picture! Tomaso! (*Seizes his sword.*) With thy accursed broom thou hast spoiled a picture Donatello could ne'er have painted! Say thy prayers, for, by the Virgin!——

TOMASO.

——Murder! murder! help! Oh, my good master! my kind master!

ANGELO.

Wilt say thy prayers, or die a sinner? Quick! or thou'rt dead ere 'tis thought on!

TOMASO.

Help! help! mercy! oh mercy!

[*Enter the Duke hastily, followed by Falcone and attendants.*]

DUKE.

Who calls so loudly? What! drawn swords at mid-day!
Disarm him! Now, what mad-cap youth art thou? (*To Angelo,*)
To fright this peaceful artist from his toil?
Rise up, sir! (*To Tomaso.*)

ANGELO, *(aside.)*

(Could my luckless star have brought
The Duke here at no other time!)

DUKE, (*looking round on the pictures.*)

Why, here's
Matter worth stumbling on! By Jove, a picture
Of admirable work! Look here, Falcone!
Dids't think there was a hand unknown in Florence
Could lay on color with a skill like this?

TOMASO, (*aside to Angelo.*)

Did'st thou hear that?

(*Duke and Falcone admire the pictures in dumb show.*)

ANGELO, (*aside to Tomaso.*)

(The pallette's on thy thumb—
Swear 'tis thy work!)

TOMASO.

Mine, master?

ANGELO.

Seest thou not
The shadow of my fault will fall upon it
While I stand here a culprit? The Duke loves thee
As one whom he has chanc'd to serve at need,
And kindness mends the light upon a picture,
I know that well!

FALCONE, (*to Tomaso.*)

The Duke would know your name, Sir!

TOMASO, (*as Angelo pulls him by the sleeve.*)

Tom—Angelo, my lord!

DUKE, (*to Falcone.*)

We've fallen here
Upon a treasure!

FALCONE.

'Twas a lucky chance
That led you in, my lord!

DUKE.

I blush to think
That I might ne'er have found such excellence
But for a chance cry, thus! Yet now 'tis found
I'll cherish it, believe me.

FALCONE.

'Tis a duty
Your Grace is never slow to.

DUKE.

I've a thought—
If you'll consent to it?

FALCONE.

Before 'tis spoken,
My gracious liege!

DUKE.

You know how well my Duchess
Loves your fair daughter. Not as maid of honor

Lost to our service, but as parting child,
We grieve to lose her.

FALCONE.

My good lord!

DUKE.

Nay, nay—
She is betroth'd now, and you needs must wed her!
My thought was, to surprise my grieving duchess
With a resemblance of your daughter, done
By this rare hand, here. 'Tis a thought well found,
You'll say it is?

FALCONE, (*hesitating.*)

Your Grace is bound away
On a brief journey. Wer't not best put off
Till our return?

DUKE, (*laughing.*)

I see you fear to let
The sun shine on your rose-bud 'till she bloom
Fairly in wedlock. But this painter, see you,
Is an old man, of a poor, timid bearing,
And may be trusted to look close upon her.
Come, come! I'll have my way! Good Angelo,

(*To Tomaso.*)

A pen and ink! And you, my lord Falcone!
Write a brief missive to your gentle daughter
T' admit him privately.

FALCONE.

I will, Duke. [*Writes.*

ANGELO, (*aside.*)

(Now
Shall I go back or forwards? If he writes
Admit this Angelo, why, I am he,
And that rare phœnix, hidden from the world,
Sits to my burning pencil. She's a beauty
Without a parallel, they say, in Florence.
Her picture 'll be remembered! Let the Duke
Rend me with horses, it shall ne'er be said
I dared not pluck at Fortune!)

TOMASO, (*aside to Angelo.*)

Signor!

ANGELO.

(Hush!
Betray me, and I'll kill thee!)

DUKE.

Angelo!

ANGELO, (*aside to Tomaso.*)

Speak, or thou diest!

TOMASO, (*to the Duke.*)

My lord!

DUKE.

Thou hast grown old
In the attainment of an excellence

Well worth thy time and study. The clear touch,
Won only by the patient toil of years,
Is on your fair works yonder.

TOMASO, (*astonished.*)

Those, my lord!

DUKE.

I shame I never saw them until now,
But here's a new beginning. Take this missive
From Count Falcone to his peerless daughter.
I'd have a picture of her for my palace.
Paint me her beauty as I know you can,
And as you do it well, my favour to you
Shall make up for the past.

TOMASO, (*as Angelo pulls his sleeve.*)

Your Grace is kind!

DUKE.

For this rude youth, name you his punishment!
(*Turns to Angelo.*)
His sword was drawn upon an unarm'd man.
He shall be fined, or, as you please, imprisoned.
Speak!

TOMASO.

If your Grace would bid him pay—

DUKE.

What sum?

TOMASO.

Some twenty flasks of wine, my gracious liege,

If it so please you. 'Tis a thriftless servant
I keep for love I bore to his dead father.
But all his faults are nothing to a thirst
That sucks my cellar dry!

DUKE.

He's well let off!
Write out a bond to pay of your first gains
The twenty flasks!

ANGELO.

Most willingly, my liege. [*Writes.*

DUKE, (*to Tomaso.*)

Are you content?

TOMASO.

Your Grace, I am!

DUKE.

Come then!
Once more to horse! Nay, nay, man, look not black!
Unless your daughter were a wine flask, trust me
There's no fear of the painter!

FALCONE.

So I think,
And you shall rule me. 'Tis the roughest shell
Hides the good pearl. Adieu, Sir! (*to Tomaso.*)

[*Exeunt Duke and Falcone.*

(*Angelo seizes the missive from Tomaso, and strides up and down the stage, reading it exultingly. After*

looking at him a moment, Tomaso does the same with the bond for the twenty flasks.)

ANGELO.

Give the letter!

Oh, here is golden opportunity—
The ladder at my foot, the prize above,
And angels beckoning upwards. I will paint
A picture now, that in the eyes of men
Shall live like loving daylight. They shall cease
To praise it for the constant glory of it.
There's not a stone built in the palace wall
But shall let thro' the light of it, and Florence
Shall be a place of pilgrimage for ever
To see the work of low-born Angelo.
Oh that the world were made without a night,
That I could toil while in my fingers play
This dexterous lightning, wasted so in sleep.
I'll out, and muse how I shall paint this beauty,
So, wile the night away. [*Exit.*

TOMASO, (*coming forward with his bond.*)

Prejudice aside, that is a pleasant-looking piece of paper! (*Holds it off, and regards it with a pleased air.*) Your bond *to pay*, now, is an ill-visaged rascal—you would know him across a church—nay—with the wind fair, *smell* him a good league! But this has, in some sort, a smile. It is not like other paper. It reads mellifluously. Your name is in the right end of it for

music. Let me dwell upon it! (*Unfolds it, and reads*) "*I, Tomaso, promise to pay*"—stay! "*I, Tomaso—I Tomaso promise to pay to Angelo my master twenty flasks of wine!*" (*Rubs his eyes, and turns the note over and over.*) There's a damnable twist in it that spoils all. "*I Tomaso*" why, that's *I*. And "*I promise to pay*"—Now, I promise no such thing! (*Turns it upside down, and, after trying in vain to alter the reading, tears it in two.*) There are some men that cannot write ten words in their own language without a blunder. Out, filthy scraps. If the Glover's daughter have not compassion upon me, I die of thirst! I'll seek her out! A pest on ignorance!

(*Pulls his hat sulkily over his eyes, and walks off.*)

SCENE III.

[*An Apartment in the Falcone Palace. Angelo discovered listening.*]

ANGELO.

Did I hear footsteps? (*He listens.*) Fancy plays me tricks
In my impatience for this lovely wonder!
That window's to the north! The light falls cool.

I'll set my easel here, and sketch her—Stay!
How shall I do that? Is she proud or sweet?
Will she sit silent, or converse and smile?
Will she be vexed or pleased to have a stranger
Pry through her beauty for the soul that's in it?
Nay, then I heard a footstep—she is here!

(*Enter Isabella, reading her father's missive.*)

ISABELLA.

"The duke would have your picture for the duchess
Done by this rude man, Angelo! Receive him
With modest privacy, and let your kindness
Be measured by his merit, not his garb."

ANGELO.

Fair lady!

ISABELLA.

Who speaks?

ANGELO.

Angelo!

ISABELLA.

You've come, sir,
To paint a dull face, trust me!

ANGELO, (*aside.*)

(Beautiful,
Beyond all dreaming!)

ISABELLA.

I've no smiles to show you,
Not ev'n a mock one! Shall I sit?

ANGELO.

No, lady!
I'll steal your beauty while you move, as well!
So you but breathe, the air still brings to me
That which outdoes all pencilling.

ISABELLA, (*walking apart.*)

His voice
Is not a rude one. What a fate is mine,
When ev'n the chance words on a poor youth's tongue,
Contrasted with the voice which I should love,
Seems rich and musical!

ANGELO, (*to himself, as he draws.*)

How like a swan,
Drooping his small head to a lily-cup,
She curves that neck of pliant ivory!
I'll paint her thus!

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

Forgetful where he is,
He thinks aloud. This is, perhaps, the rudeness
My father fear'd might anger me.

ANGELO.

What color
Can match the clear red of those glorious lips?
Say it were possible to trace the arches,
Shaped like the drawn bow of the god of love—
How tint them, after?

ISABELLA.

Still, he thinks not of me,
But murmurs to his picture. 'Twere sweet praise,
Were it a lover whispering it. I'll listen,
As I walk, still.

ANGELO.

They say, a cloudy veil
Hangs ever at the crystal-gate of heaven,
To bar the issue of its blinding glory.
So droop those silken lashes to an eye
Mortal could never paint!

ISABELLA.

There's flattery,
Would draw down angels!

ANGELO.

Now, what alchymy
Can mock the rose and lily of her cheek!
I must look closer on't! (*Advancing.*) Fair lady, please you,
I'll venture to your side.

ISABELLA.

Sir!

ANGELO, (*examining her cheek*).

There's a mixture
Of white and red here, that defeats my skill.
If you'll forgive me, I'll observe an instant,

How the bright blood and the transparent pearl
Melt to each other!

ISABELLA, (*receding from him.*)

You're too free, Sir!

ANGELO, (*with surprise.*)

Madam!

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

And yet, I think not so. He must look on it,
To paint it well.

ANGELO.

Lady! the daylight's precious!
Pray you, turn to me! In my study, here,
I've tried to fancy how that ivory shoulder
Leads the white light off from your arching neck,
But cannot, for the envious sleeve that hides it.
Please you, displace it!

(*Raises his hand to the sleeve.*)

ISABELLA.

Sir, you are too bold!

ANGELO.

Pardon me, lady! Nature's masterpiece
Should be beyond your hiding, or my praise!
Were you less marvellous, I were too bold;
But there's a pure divinity in beauty,
Which the true eye of art looks on with reverence,
Though, like angels, it were all unclad!
You have no right to hide it!

ISABELLA.

How? No right?

ANGELO.

'Tis the religion of our art, fair madam!
That, by oft looking on the type divine
In which we first were moulded, men remember
The heav'n they're born to! You've an errand here,
To show how look the angels. But, as Vestals
Cherish the sacred fire, yet let the priest
Light his lamp at it for a thousand altars,
So is your beauty unassoiled, though I
Ravish a copy for the shut-out world!

ISABELLA, *(aside.)*

Here is the wooing that should win a maid!
Bold, yet respectful—free yet full of honor!
I never saw a youth with gentler eyes;
I never heard a voice that pleas'd me more;
Let me look on him!

(Enter Tortesa, unperceived.)

ANGELO.

In a form like yours,
All parts are perfect, madam! yet, unseen,
Impossible to fancy. With your leave
I'll see your hand unglov'd.

ISABELLA, (*removing her glove*)

I have no heart
To keep it from you, signor! There it is!

ANGELO, *(taking it in his own.)*

Oh God! how beautiful thy works may be!
Inimitably perfect! Let me look
Close on the tracery of these azure veins!
With what a delicate and fragile thread
They weave their subtle mesh beneath the skin,
And meet, all blushing, in these rosy nails!
How soft the texture of these tapering fingers!
How exquisite the wrist! How perfect all!

(Tortesa rushes forward.)

TORTESA.

Now have I heard enough! Why, what are you,
To palm the hand of my betrothed bride
With this licentious freedom?

(Angelo turns composedly to his work.)

And you, madam!
With a first troth scarce cold upon your lips—
Is this your chastity?

ISABELLA.

My father's roof
Is over me! I'm not your wife!

TORTESA.

Bought! paid for!
The wedding toward—have I no right in you?
Your father, at my wish, bade you be private;
Is this obedience?

ISABELLA.

Count Falcone's will,
Has, to his daughter, ever been a law;
This, in prosperity—and now, when chance
Frowns on his broken fortunes, I were dead
To love and pity, were not soul and body
Spent for his smallest need! I did consent
To wed his ruthless creditor for this!
I would have sprung into the sea, the grave,
As questionless and soon! My *troth* is yours!
But I'm not wedded yet, and till I am,
The hallow'd honour that protects a maid
Is round me, like a circle of bright fire!
A savage would not cross it—nor shall you!
I'm mistress of my presence. Leave me, sir!

TORTESA.

There's a possession of some lordly acres
Sold to Falcone for that lily hand!
The deed 's delivered, and the hand 's my own!
I'll see that no man looks on't.

ISABELLA.

Shall a lady
Bid you begone twice?

TORTESA.

Twenty times, if't please you!

(She looks at Angelo, who continues tranquilly painting.)

ISABELLA.

Does he not wear a sword? Is he a coward,
That he can hear this man heap insult on me,
And ne'er fall on him?

TORTESA.

Lady! to your chamber!
I have a touch to give this picture, here,
But want no model for't. Come, come.

(Offers to take her by the arm.)

ISABELLA.

Stand back!
Now, will he see this wretch lay hands on me,
And never speak? He cannot be a coward!
No, no, some other reason—not a coward!
I could not love a coward!

TORTESA.

If you will
Stay where you're better miss'd—'tis at your pleasure;
I'll hew your kisses from the saucy lips
Of this bold painter—look on't, if you will!
And first, to mar his picture!

(He strikes at the canvass, when Angelo suddenly draws, attacks and disarms him.)

ANGELO.

Hold! What wouldst thou?
Fool! madman! dog! What wouldst thou with my picture?
Speak!—But thy life would not bring back a ray
Of precious daylight, and I cannot waste it!
Begone! begone!

(Throws Tortesa's sword from the window, and returns to his picture.)

I'll back to paradise!
'Twas this touch that he marr'd! So! fair again!

TORTESA, *(going out.)*

I'll find you, sir, when I'm in cooler blood!
And, madam, *you!* or Count Falcone *for* you,
Shall rue this scorn! [*Exit.*

ISABELLA, *(looking at Angelo.)*

Lost in his work once more!
I shall be jealous of my very picture!
Yet one who can forget his passions so—
Peril his life, and, losing scarce a breath,
Turn to his high, ambitious toil again—
Must have a heart for whose belated waking
Queens might keep vigil!

ANGELO.

Twilight falls, fair lady!
I must give o'er! Pray heaven, the downy wing
Of its most loving angel guard your beauty!
Good night!

(Goes out with a low reverence.)

ISABELLA.

Good night!

(She looks after him a moment, and then walks thoughtfully off the stage.)

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE I.

[*Tomaso discovered sitting at his supper, with a bottle of water before him.*]

TOMASO.

Water! (*Sips a little with a grimace.*) I think, since the world was drowned in it, it has tasted of sinners. The pious throat refuses it. Other habits grow pleasant with use—but the drinking of water lessens the liking of it. Now, why should not some rivers run wine? There are varieties in the *eatables*—will any wise man tell me why there should be but one *drinkable* in nature—and that water? My mind's made up—it's the curse of transgression.

(*A rap at the door.*)

Come in!

[*Enter Zippa, with a basket and bottle.*]

ZIPPA.

Good even, Tomaso!

TOMASO.

Zippa, I had a presentiment—

ZIPPA.

What! of my coming?

TOMASO.

No—of thy bottle! Look! I was stinting myself in water to leave room!

ZIPPA.

The reason is superfluous. There would be room in thee for wine, if thou wert drowned in the sea.

TOMASO.

God forbid!

ZIPPA.

What—that thou should'st be drowned?

TOMASO.

No—but that being drowned, I should have room for wine.

ZIPPA.

Why, now?—why?

TOMASO.

If I had room for wine, I should want it—and to want wine in the bottom of the sea, were a plague unspeakable.

ZIPPA.

Where's Angelo?

TOMASO.

What's in thy bottle? Show! Show!

ZIPPA.

Tell me where he is—what he has done since yester-

day—what thought on—what said—how he has looked, and if he still loves me; and when thou art thirsty with truth-telling—(dry work for such a liar as thou art,)—thou shalt learn what is in my bottle!

TOMASO.

Nay—learning be hanged!

ZIPPA.

So says the fool!

TOMASO.

Speak advisedly! Was not Adam blest till he knew good and evil?

ZIPPA.

Right for once.

TOMASO.

Then he lost Paradise by too much learning.

ZIPPA.

Ha! ha! Hadst thou been consulted, we should still be there!

TOMASO.

Snug! I would have had my inheritance in a small vineyard!

ZIPPA.

Tell me what I ask of thee.

TOMASO.

Thou shalt have a piece of news for a cup of wine—pay and take—till thy bottle be dry?

ZIPPA.

Come on, then! and if thou must lie let it be flattery. That's soonest forgiven.

TOMASO.

And last forgotten! Pour out! (*She pours a cup full and gives him.*) The Duke was here yesterday.—

ZIPPA.

Lie the first!

TOMASO.

And made much of my master's pictures.

ZIPPA.

Nay—that would have made two good lies. Thou'rt prodigal of stuff!

TOMASO.

Pay two glasses, then, and square the reckoning!

ZIPPA.

Come! Lie the third!

TOMASO.

What wilt thou wager it's a lie, that Angelo is painting a court lady for the Duchess?

ZIPPA.

Oh Lord! Take the bottle! They say there's truth in wine—but as truth is impossible to thee, drink thyself at least, down to probabilities!

TOMASO.

Look you there! When was virtue encouraged? Here have I been telling pure truth, and it goes for a lie. Hang virtue! Produce thy cold chicken, and I'll tell thee a lie for the wings and two for the side bones and breast. (*Offers to take the chicken.*)

ZIPPA,

Stay! stay! It's for thy master, thou glutton!

TOMASO.

Who's ill a-bed, and forbid meat. (*Angelo enters.*) I would have told thee so before, but feared to grieve thee. (She *would* have a lie!)

ZIPPA, (*starting up.*)

Ill! Angelo ill! Is he *very* ill, good Tomaso?

TOMASO.

Very! (*Seizes the chicken, as Angelo claps him on the shoulder.*)

ANGELO.

Will thy tricks never end?

TOMASO.

Ehem! ehem! (*Thrusts the chicken into his pocket.*)

ANGELO.

How art thou, Zippa?

ZIPPA.

Well, dear Angelo! (*Giving him her hand.*) And thou wert not ill, indeed?

ANGELO.

Never better by the test of a true hand! I have done work to-day, I trust will be remembered!

ZIPPA.

Is it true it's a fair lady?

ANGELO.

A lady with a face so angelical, Zippa, that—

ZIPPA.

That thou didst forget mine?

ANGELO.

In truth, I forgot there was such a thing as a world, and so forgot all in it. I was in heaven!

TOMASO, (*aside as he picks the leg of the chicken.*)

(Prosperity is excellent white-wash, and her love is an old score!)

ZIPPA, (*bitterly.*)

I am glad thou wert pleased, Angelo!—very glad!

TOMASO, (*aside.*)

(Glad as an eel to be fried.)

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

("In Heaven," was he! If I pay him not that, may

my brains rot! By what right, loving me, is he "in Heaven" with another?)

TOMASO, (*aside.*)

(No more wine and cold chicken from that quarter!)

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

(Tortesa loves me, and my false game may be played true. If he wed not Falcone's daughter, he will wed me, and so I am revenged on this fickle Angelo! I have the heart to do it!)

ANGELO.

What dost thou muse on, Zippa?

ZIPPA.

On one I love better than thee, Signor!

ANGELO.

What, angry? (*Seizes his pencil.*) Hold there till I sketch thee! By Jove thou art not half so pretty when thou'rt pleased!

ZIPPA.

Adieu, Signor! your mockery will have an end! (*Goes out with an angry air.*)

ANGELO.

What! gone? Nay, I'll come with thee, if thou'rt in earnest! What whim's this? (*Takes up his hat.*) Ho, Zippa! (*Follows in pursuit.*)

TOMASO, (*pulls the chicken from his pocket.*)

Come forth, last of the chickens! She will ne'er for-

give him, and so ends the succession of cold fowl. One glass to its memory, and then to bed! (*Drinks, and takes up the candle.*) A woman is generally unsafe—but a jealous one spoils all confidence in drink.

[*Exit, muttering.*

SCENE II.

[*An Apartment in the Falcone Palace. Enter Servant, shewing in Zippa.*]

SERVANT.

Wait here, if't please you!

ZIPPA.

Thanks! (*Exit Servant.*) My heart misgives me!
'Tis a bold errand I am come upon—
And I a stranger to her! Yet, perchance
She needs a friend—the proudest do sometimes—
And mean ones may be welcome. Look! she comes!

ISABELLA.

You wished to speak with me?

ZIPPA.

I *did*—but now
My memory is crept into my eyes;

I cannot think for gazing on your beauty!
Pardon me, lady!

ISABELLA.

You're too fair yourself
To find my face a wonder. Speak! Who are you?

ZIPPA.

Zippa, the Glover's daughter, and your friend!

ISABELLA.

My friend?

ZIPPA.

I said so. You're a noble lady
And I a low-born maid—yet I have come
To offer you my friendship.

ISABELLA.

This seems strange!

ZIPPA.

I'll make it less so, if you'll give me leave.

ISABELLA.

You'll please me!

ZIPPA.

Briefly—for the time is precious
To me as well as you—I have a lover,
A true one, as I think, who yet finds boldness
To seek your hand in marriage.

ISABELLA.

How? We're rivals!

ZIPPA.

Tortesa loves me, and for that I'd wed him.
Yet I'm not sure I love him more than you—
And you must hate him.

ISABELLA.

So far freely spoken—
What was your thought in coming to me now ?

ZIPPA.

To mar your match with him, and so make mine !

ISABELLA.

Why, free again ! Yet, as you love him not
'Tis strange you seek to wed him !

ZIPPA.

Oh no, madam !
Woman loves once unthinkingly. The heart
Is born with her first love, and, new to joy,
Breathes to the first wind its delicious sweetness,
But gets none back ! So comes its bitter wisdom !
When next we think of love, 'tis *who loves us !*
I said Tortesa loved me !

ISABELLA.

You shall have him
With all my heart ! See—I'm your friend already !
And friends are equals. So approach, and tell me,
What was this first love like, that you discourse
So prettily upon ?

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

(Dear Angelo!
'Twill be a happiness to talk of him!)
I loved a youth, kind madam! far beneath
The notice of your eyes, unknown and poor.

ISABELLA.

A handsome youth?

ZIPPA.

Indeed, I thought him so!
But you would not. I loved him out of pity;
No one cared for him.

ISABELLA.

Was he so forlorn?

ZIPPA.

He was our neighbor, and I knew his toil
Was almost profitless; and 'twas a pleasure
To fill my basket from our wasteful table,
And steal, at eve, to sup with him.

ISABELLA, (*smiling.*)

Why, that
Was charity, indeed! He loved you for it—
Was't not so?

ZIPPA.

He was like a brother to me—
The kindest brother sister ever had.
I built my hopes upon his gentleness:

He had no other quality to love.
Th'ambitious change—so do the fiery-hearted:
The lowly are more constant.

ISABELLA.

And yet, he
Was, after all, a false one?

ZIPPA.

Nay, dear lady!
I'll check my story there! 'Twould end in anger,
Perhaps in tears. If I am not too bold,
Tell me, in turn, of all your worshippers—
Was there ne'er one that pleased you?

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(Now could I
Prate to this humble maid of Angelo,
Till matins rang again!) My gentle Zippa!
I have found all men prompt to talk of love,
Save only one. I will confess to you,
For that one could I die! Yet, so unlike
Your faithless lover must I draw his picture,
That you will wonder how such opposites
Could both be loved of women.

ZIPPA.

Was he fair,
Or brown?

ISABELLA.

In truth, I marked not his complexion.

ZIPPA.

Tall?

ISABELLA.

That I know not.

ZIPPA.

Well—robust, or slight?

ISABELLA.

I cannot tell, indeed! I heard him speak—
Looked in his eyes, and saw him calm and angered—
And see him now, in fancy, standing there—
Yet know not limb or feature!

ZIPPA.

You but saw
A shadow, lady!

ISABELLA.

Nay—I saw a *soul!*
His eyes were light with it. The forehead lay
Above their fires in calm tranquillity,
As the sky sleeps o'er thunder-clouds. His look
Was mixed of these—earnest, and yet subdued—
Gentle, yet passionate—sometimes half god-like
In its command, then mild and sweet again,
Like a stern angel taught humility!
Oh! when he spoke, my heart stole out to him!
There was a spirit-echo in his voice—
A sound of thought—of under-playing music—

As if, before it ceased in human ears,
The echo was caught up in fairy-land!

ZIPPA.

Was he a courtier, madam?

ISABELLA.

He's as lowly
In birth and fortunes, as your false one, Zippa!
Yet rich in genius, and of that ambition,
That he'll outlast nobility with fame.
Have you seen such a man?

ZIPPA.

Alas! sweet lady!
My life is humble, and such wondrous men
Are far above *my* knowing. I could wish
To *see* one ere I died!

ISABELLA.

You *shall*, believe me!
But while we talk of lovers, we forget
In how brief time you are to win a husband.
Come to my chamber, Zippa, and I'll see
How with your little net you'll snare a bird
Fierce as this rude Tortesa!

ZIPPA.

We will find
A way, dear lady, if we die for it!

ISABELLA.

Shall we? Come with me, then! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

[*An Apartment in the Falcone Palace. Tortesa alone waiting the return of the Count.*]

TORTESA, (*musing.*)

There are some luxuries too rich for purchase.
Your *soul*, 'tis said, will buy them, of the devil—
Money's too poor! What would I not give, now,
That I could *scorn* what I can hate and ruin!
Scorn is the priceless luxury! In heaven,
The angels *pity*. They are blest to do so;
For, pitying, they look down. We do't by *scorn!*
There lies the privilege of noble birth!—
The jewel of that bloated toad is *scorn!*
You may take all else from him. You—being mean—
May get his palaces—may wed his daughter—
Sleep in his bed—have all his peacock menials
Watching your least glance, as they did "my lord's;"
And, well-possess'd thus, you may pass him by
On his own horse; and while the vulgar crowd
Gape at your trappings, and scarce look on him—
He in his rags, and starving for a crust—
You'll feel his *scorn*, through twenty coats of mail,
Hot as a sun-stroke! Yet there's something for us!
Th' archangel fiend, when driven forth from heaven,
Put on the serpent, and found sweet revenge
Trailing his slime through Eden! So will I!

[*Enter Falcone, booted and spurred.*]

FALCONE.

Good morrow, signor,

TORTESA.

Well-arrived, my lord!

How sped your riding?

FALCONE.

Fairly! Has my daughter

Left you alone?

TORTESA.

She knows that I am here.

Nay—she'll come presently! A word in private,

Since we're alone, my lord!

FALCONE.

I listen, signor!

TORTESA.

Your honor, as I think, outweighs a bond?

FALCONE.

'Twas never questioned.

TORTESA.

On your simple word,

And such more weight as hangs upon the troth

Of a capricious woman, I gave up

A deed of lands to you.

FALCONE.

You did.

TORTESA.

To be
Forfeit, and mine again—the match not made?

FALCONE.

How if *you* marr'd it?

TORTESA.

I? I'm not a boy!
What I would yesterday, I will to-day!
I'm not a lover—

FALCONE.

How? So near your bridal,
And not a lover? Shame, sir!

TORTESA.

My lord count,
You take me for a fool!

FALCONE.

Is't like a fool
To love a high-born lady, and your bride?

TORTESA.

Yes; a thrice-sodden fool—if it were I!
I'm not a mate for her—you know I am not!
You know that, in her heart, your haughty daughter
Scorns me—ineffably!

FALCONE.

You seek occasion
To slight her, signor!

TORTESA.

No! I'll marry her
If all the pride that cast down Lucifer
Lie in her bridal-ring! But, mark me still!
I'm not one of your humble citizens,
To bring my money-bags and make you rich—
That, when we walk together, I may take
Your shadow for my own! These limbs are clay—
Poor, common clay, my lord! And she that weds me
Comes down to my estate.

FALCONE.

By this you mean not
To shut her from her friends?

TORTESA.

You'll see your daughter
By coming to my house—not else! D'ye think
I'll have a carriage to convey my wife
Where she will hear me laughed at?—buy fine horses
To prance a measure to the mocking jeers
Of fools that ride with her? Nay—keep a table
Where I'm the skeleton that mars the feast?
No, no—no, no!

FALCONE, (*aside.*)

(With half the provocation,

I would, ere now, have struck an emperor!
But baser pangs make this endurable.
I'm poor—so patience!) What was it beside
You would have said to me?

TORTESA.

But this: Your daughter
Has, in your absence, covered me with scorn!
We'll not talk of it—if the match goes on,
I care not to remember it! *(Aside.)* (*She* shall—
And bitterly!)

FALCONE, *(aside.)*

(My poor, poor Isabella!
The task was too much!)

TORTESA.

There's a cost of feeling—
You may not think it much—*I* reckon it
A thousand pounds per day—in playing thus
The suitor to a lady cramm'd with pride!
I've writ you out a bond to pay me for it!
See here!—to pay me for my shame and pains,
If I should lose your daughter for a wife,
A thousand pounds per day—dog cheap at that!
Sign it, my lord, or give me back my deeds,
And *traffic* cease between us!

FALCONE.

Is this earnest,
Or are you mad or trifling? Do I not

Give you my daughter with an open hand?
Are you betroth'd or no?

[*Enter a Servant.*]

Who's this?

SERVANT.

A page
Sent from the Duke

FALCONE.

Admit him.

[*Enter Page with a letter.*]

PAGE.

For my Lord,
The Count Falcone.

TORTESA, *(aside.)*

(In a moment more
I would have had a bond of such assurance
Her father on his knees should bid me take her.
(Looking at Falcone, who smiles as he reads.)
What glads him now?)

FALCONE.

You shall not have the bond!

TORTESA.

No? *(aside.)* (Here's a change! What hint from Duke or devil
Stirs him to this?) My lord, 'twere best the bridal

Took place upon the instant. Is your daughter
Ready within ?

FALCONE.

You'll never wed my daughter!

[*Enter Isabella.*]

TORTESA.

My Lord!

FALCONE.

She's fitlier mated! Here she comes!
My lofty Isabella! My fair child!
How dost thou, sweet?

ISABELLA, *(embracing him.)*

Come home, and I not know it!
Art well? I see thou art! Hast ridden hard!
My dear, dear father!

FALCONE.

Give me breath to tell thee
Some better news, my lov'd one!

ISABELLA.

Nay, the joy
To see you back again 's enough for now.
There can be no news better, and for this
Let's keep a holiday twixt this and sunset!
Shut up your letter, and come see my flowers,
And hear my birds sing, will you?

FALCONE.

Look, my darling,
Upon this first! *(Holds up the letter.)*

ISABELLA.

No! you shall tell me all
You and the Duke did—where you slept, where ate,
Whether you dream'd of me—and, now I think on't,
Found you no wild-flow'rs as you cross'd the mountain?

FALCONE.

My own bright child! *(Looks fondly upon her.)*

TORTESA, *(aside.)*

('Twill mar your joy, my lord!
To see the Glover's daughter in your palace,
And your proud daughter houseless!)

FALCONE, *(to Isabella.)*

You'll not hear
The news I have for you!

TORTESA, *(advancing.)*

Before you tell it,
I'll take my own again!

ISABELLA, *(aside.)*

(Tortesa here!) *(curtseys.)*
I crave your pardon, sir; I saw you not!
(Oh hateful monster!) *(aside.)*

FALCONE.

Listen to my news,

Signor Tortesa! It concerns you, trust me!

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(More of this hateful marriage!)

TORTESA.

Tell it briefly,
My time is precious!

FALCONE.

Sir I'll sum it up
In twenty words. The Duke has information,
By what means yet I know not, that my need
Spurs me to marry an unwilling daughter.
He bars the match!—redeems my lands and palace,
And has enrich'd the young Count Julian,
For whom he bids me keep my daughter's hand!
Kind, royal master! (*Reads the note to himself.*)

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(Never!)

TORTESA, (*aside, with suppressed rage.*)

('Tis a lie!
He's mad, or plays some trick to gain the time—
Or there's a woman hatching deviltry!
We'll see.) (*Looks at Isabella.*)

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(I'll die first! Sold and taken back,
Then thrust upon a husband paid to take me!
To save my father I have weigh'd myself,

Heart, hand, and honour, against so much land!—
I—Isabella! I'm nor hawk nor hound,
And, if I change my master, I will choose him!)

TORTESA, (*aside.*)

She seems not over-pleased!

PAGE.

Your pardon, Count!
I wait your answer to the Duke!

FALCONE.

My daughter
Shall give it you herself. What sweet phrase have you,
Grateful and eloquent, to bear your thanks?
Speak, Isabella!

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(There's but one way left!
Courage, poor heart, and think on Angelo!
(*Advances suddenly to Tortesa.*)
Signor Tortesa!

TORTESA.

Madam!

ISABELLA.

There's my hand!
Is't yours, or no?

TORTESA.

There *was* a troth between us!

ISABELLA.

It's broke?

TORTESA.

I have not broke it!

ISABELLA.

Then why stand you
Mute as a statue, when 'tis struck asunder
Without our wish or knowledge? Would you be
Half so indifferent had you lost a horse?
Am I worth having?

ORTES A.

Is my life worth having?

ISABELLA.

Then are you robb'd! Look to it!

FALCONE.

Is she mad!

TORTESA.

You'll marry me?

ISABELLA.

I will!

FALCONE.

By heaven you shall not!
What, shall my daughter wed a leprosy—
A bloated money-canker? Leave her hand!
Stand from him, Isabella!

ISABELLA.

Sir! you gave me
This "leper" for a husband, three days gone;
I did not ask my heart if I could love him!
I took him with the meekness of a child,
Trusting my father! I was shut up for him—
Forc'd to receive no other company—
My wedding-clothes made, and the match proclaim'd
Through Florence!

FALCONE.

Do you love him?—tell me quickly!

ISABELLA.

You never ask'd me that when I was bid
To wed him!

FALCONE.

I am dumb!

TORTESA.

Ha! ha!! well put!
At him again, 'Bel! Well! I've had misgivings
That there was food in me for ladies' liking.
I've been too modest!

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(Monster of disgust!)

FALCONE.

My daughter! I would speak with you in private!
Signor! you'll pardon me.

ISABELLA.

Go you, dear father!
I'll follow straight. [*Exit Falcone.*

TORTESA, (*aside.*)

(She loiters for a kiss!
They're all alike! The same trick woos them all!)
Come to me, 'Bel!

ISABELLA, (*coldly*)

To morrow at this hour
You'll find the priest here, and the bridesmaids waiting.
Till then, adieu! [*Exit.*

TORTESA

Hola! what, gone? Why, Bella!
Sweetheart, I say! So! She would coy it with me!
Well, well, to-morrow! 'Tis not long, and kisses
Pay interest by seconds! There's a leg!
As she stood there, the calf shewed handsomely.
Faith 'tis a shapely one! I wonder now,
Which of my points she finds most admirable!
Something I never thought on, like as not.
We do not see ourselves as others see us.
'Twould not surprise me now, if 'twere my beard—
My forehead! I've a hand indifferent white!
Nay, I've been told my waist was neatly turn'd.
We *do not* see ourselves as others see us!
How goes the hour? I'll home and fit my hose

To tie trim for the morrow. (*Going out.*) Hem! the door's

Lofty. I like that! I will have mine raised.

Your low door makes one stoop! [*Exit.*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I.

[*Angelo discovered in his studio, painting upon the picture of Isabella.*]

ANGELO.

My soul is drunk with gazing on this face.
I reel and faint with it. In what sweet world
Have I traced all its lineaments before?
I know them. Like a troop of long-lost friends,
My pencil wakes them with its eager touch,
And they spring up, rejoicing. Oh, I'll gem
The heaven of Fame with my irradiate pictures,
Like kindling planets—but this glorious one
Shall be their herald, like the evening star,
First-lit, and lending of its fire to all.
The day fades—but the lamp burns on within me.
My bosom has no dark, no sleep, no change
To dream or calm oblivion. I work on
When my hand stops. The light tints fade. Good night,
Fair image of the fairest thing on earth,
Bright Isabella!

(*Leans on the rod with which he guides his hand, and remains looking at his picture.*)

[*Enter Tomaso, with two bags of money.*]

TOMASO.

For the most excellent painter, Angelo, two hundred ducats! The genius of my master flashes upon me. The Duke's greeting and two hundred ducats! If I should not have died in my blindness but for this eye-water, may I be hanged. (*Looks at Angelo.*) He is studying his picture. What an air there is about him—lofty, unlike the vulgar! Two hundred ducats! (*Observes Angelo's hat on the table.*) It strikes me now that I can see genius in that hat. It is not like a common hat. Not like a bought hat. The rim turns to the crown with an intelligence. (*Weighs the ducats in his hand.*) Good heavy ducats. What it is to refresh the vision! I have looked round, ere now, in this very chamber, and fancied that the furniture expressed a melancholy dulness. When he hath talked to me of his pictures, I have seen the chairs smile. Nay, as if shamed to listen, the very table has looked foolish. Now, all about me expresseth a choice peculiarity—as you would say, how like a genius to have such chairs! What a painter-like table! Two hundred ducats!

ANGELO.

What hast thou for supper?

TOMASO.

Two hundred ducats, my great master!

ANGELO, (*absently.*)

A cup of wine! Wine, Tomaso! [*Sits down.*

TOMASO.

(So would the great Donatello have sat upon his chair! His legs thus! His hand falling thus!) (*Aloud.*) There is nought in the cellar but stale beer, my illustrious master! (Now, it strikes me, that his shadow is unlike another man's—of a *pink* tinge, somehow—yet that may be fancy.)

ANGELO.

Hast thou no money? Get wine, I say?

TOMASO.

I saw the duke in the market-place, who called me Angelo, (we shall rue that trick yet,) and with a gracious smile asked me if thou hadst paid the twenty flasks.

ANGELO, (*not listening.*)

Is there no wine?

TOMASO.

I said to his grace, no! Pray mark the sequel: In pity of my thirst, the duke sends me two—ahem!—*one* hundred ducats. Here they are!

ANGELO.

Didst thou say the wine was on the lees?

TOMASO.

With these *fifty* ducats we shall buy nothing but wine (He will be rich with fifty.)

ANGELO.

What saidst thou?

TOMASO.

I spoke of *twenty* ducats sent thee by the duke. Wilt thou finger them ere one is spent?

ANGELO.

I asked thee for wine—I am parched.

TOMASO.

Of these *ten* ducats, think'st thou we might spend one for a flask of better quality?

ANGELO.

Lend me a ducat, if thou hast one, and buy wine presently. Go!

TOMASO.

I'll lend it thee, willingly, my illustrious master. It is my last, but as much thine as mine.

ANGELO.

Go! Go!

TOMASO.

Yet wait! There's a scrap of news? Falcone's daughter marries Tortesa, the usurer? To morrow is the bridal.

ANGELO.

How?

TOMASO.

I learned it in the market-place! There will be rare doings!

ANGELO.

Dog! Villain! Thou hast lied? Thou dar'st not say it!

TOMASO.

Hey! Art thou mad? Nay—borrow thy ducat where thou canst! I'll spend that's my own. Adieu, master!

(*Exit Tomaso, and enter Tortesa with a complacent smile.*)

ANGELO.

Ha?—well arrived! (*Draws his sword.*

TORTESA.

Good eve, good Signor Painter.

ANGELO.

You struck me yesterday.

TORTESA.

I harmed your picture—
For which I'm truly sorry—but not you!

ANGELO.

Myself! myself! My picture is myself!
What are my bones that rot? Is this my hand?—
Is this my eye?

TORTESA.

I think so.

ANGELO.

No, I say!

The hand and eye of Angelo are there!
There—there—(*Points to his pictures*)—immortal!
Wound me in the flesh,
I will forgive you upon fair excuse.
'Tis the earth round me—'tis my shell—my house!
But in my picture lie my brain and heart—
My soul—my fancy. For a blow at these
There's no cold reparation. Draw and quickly!
I'm in the mood to fight it to the death.
Stand on your guard!

TORTESA.

I will not fight with you.

ANGELO.

Coward!

TORTESA.

I'm deaf.

ANGELO.

Feel then!

(*Tortesa catches the blow as he strikes him, and coldly flings back his hand.*)

TORTESA.

Nay, strike me not!
I'll call the guard, and cry out like a woman.

ANGELO (*turning from him contemptuously.*)

What scent of dog's meat brought me such a cur!
It is a whip I want, and not a sword.

TORTESA (*folding his arms.*)

I have a use for life so far above
The stake you quarrel for, that you may choose
Your words to please yourself. They'll please me, too.
Yet you're in luck. I killed a man on Monday
For spitting on my *shadow*. Thursday's sun
Will dry the insult, though it light on *me!*

ANGELO.

Oh, subtle coward!

TORTESA.

I am what you will,
So I'm alive to marry on the morrow!
'Tis well, by Jupiter! Shall you have power
With half a breath to pluck from me a wife!
Shall I, against a life as poor as yours—
Mine being precious as the keys of Heaven—
Set all upon a throw, and no odds neither?
I know what honour is as well as you!
I know the weight and measure of an insult—
What it is worth to take or fling it back.
I have the hand to fight if I've a mind;
And I've a heart to shut my sunshine in,
And lock it from the scowling of the world,
Though all mankind cry "Coward!"

ANGELO.

Mouthing braggart!

TORTESA.

I came to see my bride, my Isabella!
Show me her picture! (*Advances to look for it.*)

ANGELO.

Do but look upon't,
By heaven's fair light, I'll kill you! [*Draws.*

TORTESA.

Soft, she's mine!
She loves me! and with that to make life precious,
I have the nerve to beat back Hercules,
If you were he!

ANGELO, (*attacking him.*)

Out! Out! thou shameless liar!

TORTESA, (*retreating on the defence.*)

Thy blows and words fall pointless. Nay, thou'rt mad!
But I'll not harm thee for her picture's sake!

ANGELO.

Liar! she hates thee!
(*Beats him off the stage and returns, closing the door violently.*)
So! once more alone!
(*Takes Isabella's picture from the easel, and replaces it with Zippa's.*)
Back to the wall, deceitful loveliness!
And come forth, Zippa, fair in honest truth!

I'll make *thee* beautiful!

(*Takes his pencil and palette to paint.*)

[*A knock is heard*]

Who knocks! come in!

[*Enter Isabella, disguised as a monk.*]

ISABELLA.

Good morrow, signor!

ANGELO, (*turning sharply to the monk.*)

There's a face, old monk,
Might stir your blood—ha? You shall tell me, now,
Which of these heavenly features hides the soul!
There *is* one! I have worked upon the picture
Till *my* brain's thick—I cannot see like you.
Where is't?

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(A picture of the Glover's daughter!
What does he, painting *her?*) Is't for its *beauty*
You paint that face, sir?

ANGELO.

Yes—th' immortal beauty!
Look here! What see you in that face? The skin—

ISABELLA.

Brown as a vintage-girl's!

ANGELO.

The mouth—

ISABELLA.

A good one
To eat and drink withal!

ANGELO.

The eye is—

ISABELLA.

Grey!

You'll buy a hundred like it for a penny!

ANGELO.

A hundred eyes?

ISABELLA.

No. Hazel-nuts!

ANGELO.

The forehead—

How find you that?

ISABELLA.

Why, made to match the rest!

I'll cut as good a face out of an apple—

For all that's fair in it!

ANGELO.

Oh, heaven, how dim

Were God's most blessed image did all eyes

Look on't like thine! Is't by the red and white—

Is't by the grain and tincture of the skin—

Is't by the hair's gloss, or the forehead's arching,

You know the bright inhabitant? I tell thee

The spark of their divinity in some

Lights up an *inward* face—so radiant

The outward lineaments are like a veil

Floating before the sanctuary—forgot
In glimpses of the glory streaming through!

ISABELLA, (*mournfully.*)

Is Zippa's face so radiant?

ANGELO.

Look upon it!
You see thro' all the countenance she's *true!*

ISABELLA.

True to *you*, signor!

ANGELO.

To herself, old man!
Yet *once*, to *me* too! (*dejectedly*)

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(Once to him! Can Zippa
Have dared to love a man like Angelo!
I think she dare not. Yet if he, indeed,
Were the inconstant lover that she told of—
The youth who was "her neighbor!") Please you, signor!
Was that fair maid your neighbor?

ANGELO.

Ay—the best!
A loving sister were not half so kind!
I never supp'd without her company.
Yet she was modest as an unsunn'd lily,
And bounteous as the constant perfume of it.

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

'Twas he indeed! Oh! what a fair outside

Has falsehood there! Yet stay! If it were *I*
Who made him false to her? Alas, for honor,
I must forgive him—tho' my lips are weary
With telling Zippa how I thought him perjured!
I cannot trust her more—I'll plot alone!)

(*Turns and takes her own picture from the wall.*)

ISABELLA.

What picture's this, turned to the wall, good signor?

ANGELO.

A painted lie!

ISABELLA.

A lie!—nay—pardon me!
I spoke in haste. Methought 'twas like a lady
I'd somewhere seen!—a lady—Isabella!
But she was true!

ANGELO.

Then 'tis not she I've drawn.
For that's a likeness of as false a face
As ever devil did his mischief under.

ISABELLA.

And yet methinks 'tis done most lovingly!
You must have thought it fair to dwell so on it.

ANGELO.

Your convent has the picture of a saint
Tempted, while praying, by the shape of woman.
The painter knew that woman was the devil,
Yet drew her like an angel!

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

(It is true
He praised my beauty as a painter may—
No more—in words. He praised me as he drew—
Feature by feature. But who calls the lip
To answer for a perjured oath in love?
How should love breathe—how not die, choked for utterance,
If *words* were all. He loved me with his eyes.
He breathed it. Upon every word he spoke
Hung an unuttered worship that his tongue
Would spend a life to make articulate.
Did he not take my hand into his own?
And, as his heart sprang o'er that bridge of veins,
Did he not call to mine to pass him on it—
Each to the other's bosom! I have sworn
To love him—wed him—die with him—and yet
He never *heard* me—but he *knows* it well,
And, in his heart, holds me to answer for it.
I'll try once more to find this anger out.
If it be jealousy—why—then, indeed,
He'll call me black, and I'll forgive it him!
For then my errand's done, and I'll away
To play the cheat out that shall make him mine.)
(*Turns to Angelo.*) Fair signor, by your leave, I've heard it said

That in the beauty of a human face
The God of Nature never writ a lie.

ANGELO.

'Tis likely true!

ISABELLA.

That howso'er the features
Seem fair at first, a blemish on the soul
Has its betraying speck that warns you of it.

ANGELO.

It should be so, indeed!

ISABELLA.

Nay—here's a face
Will show at once if it be true or no.
At the first glance 'tis fair!

ANGELO.

Most heavenly fair!

ISABELLA.

Yet, in the lip, methinks, there lurks a shadow—
Something—I know not what—but in it lies
The devil you spoke of!

ANGELO.

Ay—but 'tis not there!
Not in her lip! Oh no! Look elsewhere for it.
'Tis passionately bright—but lip more pure
Ne'er passed unchallenged through the gate of heaven.
Believe me, 'tis not there!

ISABELLA.

How falls the light?

I see a gleam not quite angelical
About the eye. Maybe the light falls wrong—

ANGELO, (*drawing her to another position.*)

Stand here! D'ye see it now?

ISABELLA.

'Tis just so here!

ANGELO, (*sweeps the air with his brush.*)

There's some curst cobweb hanging from the wall
That blurs your sight. Now, look again!

ISABELLA.

I see it
Just as before.

ANGELO.

What! still? You've turn'd an eyelash
Under the lid. Try how it feels with winking.
Is't clear?

ISABELLA.

'Twas never clearer!

ANGELO.

Then, old man!
You'd best betake you to your prayers apace!
For you've a failing sight, death's sure forerunner—
And cannot pray long. Why, that eye's a star,
Sky-lit as Hesperus, and burns as clear.
If you e'er marked the zenith at high noon,
Or midnight, when the blue lifts up to God—

Her eye's of that far darkness!

ISABELLA, (*smiling aside.*)

Stay—'tis gone!
A blur was on my sight, which, passing from it,
I see as you do. Yes—the eye is clear.
The forehead only, now I see so well,
Has in its arch a mark infallible
Of a false heart beneath it.

ANGELO.

Show it to me!

ISABELLA.

Between the eyebrows there!

ANGELO.

I see a tablet
Whereon the Saviour's finger might have writ
The new commandment. When I painted it
I plucked a just-blown lotus from the shade,
And shamed the white leaf till it seemed a spot—
The brow was so much fairer! Go! old man,
Thy sight fails fast. Go! go!

ISABELLA.

The nostril's small—
Is't not?

ANGELO.

No!

ISABELLA.

Then the cheek's awry so near it,
It makes it seem so!

ANGELO.

Out! thou cavilling fool!
Thou'rt one of those whose own deformity
Makes all thou seest look monstrous. Go and pray
For a clear sight, and read thy missal with it:
Thou art a priest and livest by the altar,
Yet dost thou recognize Heav'n's imprest seal,
Set on that glorious beauty!

ISABELLA, *(aside)*.

(Oh, he loves me!
Loves me as genius loves—ransacking earth,
And ruffling the forbidden flowers of heaven
To make celestial incense of his praise.
High-thoughted Angelo! He loves me well!
With what a gush of all my soul I thank him—
But he's to win yet, and the time is precious.)
(*To Angelo.*) Signor, I take my leave.

ANGELO.

Good day, old man
And if thou com'st again, bring new eyes with thee,
Or thou wilt find scant welcome.

ISABELLA.

You shall like

These same eyes well enough when next I come!

[*Exit.*

ANGELO.

A crabbed monk! (*Turns the picture to the wall again.*)
I'll hide this fatal picture
From sight once more, for till he made me look on't
I did not know my weakness. Once more, Zippa,
I'll dwell on thy dear face, and with my pencil
Make thee more fair than life, and try to love thee!
(*A knock.*)
Come in!

[*Enter Zippa.*]

ZIPPA.

Good day, Signor Angelo!

ANGELO.

Why, Zippa, is't thou? is't thou, indeed!

ZIPPA.

Myself, dear Angelo!

ANGELO.

Art well?

ZIPPA.

Ay!

ANGELO.

Hast been well?

ZIPPA.

Ay!

ANGELO.

Then why, for three long days, hast thou not been near me?

ZIPPA.

Ask thyself, Signor Angelo!

ANGELO.

I have—a hundred times since I saw thee.

ZIPPA.

And there was no answer?

ANGELO.

None!

ZIPPA.

Then should'st thou have asked the picture on thy easel!

ANGELO.

Nay—I understand thee not.

ZIPPA.

Did I not find thee feasting thy eyes upon it?

ANGELO.

True—thou didst?

ZIPPA.

And art thou not enamoured of it—wilt tell me truly?

ANGELO, (*smiling.*)

'Tis a fair face;

ZIPPA.

Oh, unkind Angelo!

ANGELO.

Look on't! and, seeing its beauty, if thou dost not forgive me, I will never touch pencil to it more.

ZIPPA.

I'll neither look on't, nor forgive thee. But if thou wilt love the picture of another better than mine, thou shalt paint a new one!

(*As she rushes up to dash it from the easel, Angelo catches her arm and points to the picture. She looks at it, and, seeing her own portrait, turns and falls on his bosom.*)

ZIPPA.

My picture! and I thought thee so false! Dear, dear, Angelo! I could be grieved to have wronged thee, if joy would give me time. But thou'lt forgive me?

ANGELO.

Willingly! Willingly!

ZIPPA.

And thou lovest me indeed, indeed! Nay, answer not! I will never doubt thee more! Dear Angelo!
Yet—(*Suddenly turns from Angelo with a troubled air,*)

ANGELO.

What ails thee now?

(*Zippa takes a rich veil from under her cloak, throws it over her head, and looks on the ground in embarrass'd silence.*)

Dost thou stand there for a picture of Silence?

ZIPPA.

Alas! dear Angelo! When I said I forgave and lov'd thee, I forgot that I was to be married to-morrow!

ANGELO.

Married to whom?

ZIPPA.

Tortesa, the usurer!

ANGELO.

Tortesa, saidst thou?

ZIPPA.

Think not ill of me, dear Angelo, till I have told thee all! This rich usurer, as thou knowest, would for *ambition* marry Isabella de Falcone.

ANGELO.

He would, I know.

ZIPPA.

But for *love*, he would marry your poor Zippa.

ANGELO.

Know you that?

ZIPPA.

He told me so the day you anger'd me with the praises of the court lady you were painting. What was her name, Angelo?

ANGELO, (*composedly.*)

I—I'll tell thee presently! Go on!

ZIPPA.

Well—jealous of this unknown lady, I vow'd, if it broke my heart, to wed Tortesa. He had told me Isabella scorn'd him. I flew to her palace. She heard me, pitied me, agreed to plot with me that I might wed the usurer, and then told me in confidence that there was a poor youth whom she loved and would fain marry.

ANGELO, (*in breathless anxiety.*)

Heard you his name?

ZIPPA.

No! but as I was to wed the richer and she the poorer, she took my poor veil, and gave me her rich one. Now canst thou read the riddle?

ANGELO, (*aside.*)

(A "poor youth!" What if it is I? She "loves and will wed him!" Oh! if it were I!)

ZIPPA.

Nay, dear Angelo! be not so angry! I do not love him!—Nay—thou knowst I do not!

ANGELO, (*aside.*)

(It may be—nay—it must? But I will know! If not, I may as well die of that as of this jealous madness.)

(*Prepares to go out.*)

ZIPPA.

Angelo! where go you? Forgive me, dear Angelo! I swear to thee I love him not!

ANGELO.

I'll know who that poor youth is, or suspense will kill me!

(*Goes out hastily, without a look at Zippa, She stands silent and amazed for a moment.*)

ZIPPA.

Why cares he to know who that poor youth is! "Suspense will kill him?" Stay! a light breaks on me! If Isabella were the Court lady whom he painted! If it were Angelo whom she loved! He is a "poor youth!"—The picture! The picture will tell all!

(*Hurriedly looks at several pictures turned to the wall, and last of all, Isabella's. Glances at it an instant, and exclaims*)

Isabella!

(*She drops on her knees, overcome with grief, and the scene closes.*)

SCENE II.

[*A Lady's dressing-room in the Falcone Palace. Isabella discovered with two phials.*]

ISABELLA.

Here is a draught will still the breath so nearly,
The keenest-eyed will think the sleeper dead,—
And *this* kills quite. Lie ready, trusty friends,

Close by my bridal veil! I thought to baffle
My ruffian bridegroom by an easier cheat;
But Zippa's dangerous, and if I fail
In *mocking* death, why *death indeed* be welcome!

(*Enter Zippa angrily.*)

ZIPPA.

Madam!

ISABELLA.

You come rudely!

ZIPPA.

If I offend you more, I still have cause—
Yet as the "friend" to whom you gave a husband,
(So kind you were!) I *might* come unannounced!

ISABELLA.

What is this anger!

ZIPPA.

I'm not angry, madam!
Oh no! I'm patient!

ISABELLA.

What's your errand, then?

ZIPPA.

To give you back your costly bridal veil
And take my mean one.

ISABELLA.

'Twas *your* wish to change.
'Twas *you* that plotted we should wed together—
You in my place, and I in yours—was't not?

ZIPPA.

Oh, heaven! you're calm! Had *you* no plotting, too?
You're noble born, and so your face is marble—
I'm poor, and if my heart aches, 'twill show through.
You've robb'd me madam!

ISABELLA.

I?

ZIPPA.

Of gold—of jewels!—
Gold that would stretch the fancy but to dream of,
And gems like stars!

ISABELLA.

You're mad!

ZIPPA.

His love was worth them!
Oh, what had you to do with Angelo?

ISABELLA.

Nay—came you not to wed Tortesa freely?
What should *you* do with Angelo?

ZIPPA.

You mock me!
You are a woman, though your brow's a rock,
And know what love is. In a ring of fire
The tortured scorpion stings himself, to die—
But love will turn upon itself, and grow
Of its own fang immortal!

ISABELLA.

Still, you left him
To wed another?

ZIPPA.

'Tis for that he's mine!
What makes a right in any thing, but pain?
The diver's agony beneath the sea
Makes the pearl his—pain gets the miser's gold—
The noble's coronet, won first in battle,
Is his by bleeding for't—and Angelo
Is ten times mine because I gave him up—
Crushing my heart to do so!

ISABELLA.

Now you plead
Against yourself. Say it would kill *me* quite,
If you should wed him? Mine's the greater pain,
And so the fairer title!

ZIPPA, (*falling on her knees.*)

I implore you
Love him no more! Upon my knees I do!
He's not like you! Look on your snow-white arms!
They're form'd to press a noble to your breast—
Not Angelo! He's poor—and fit for mine!
You would not lift a beggar to your lips!—
You would not lean from your proud palace-stairs
To pluck away a heart from a poor girl,
Who has no more on earth!

ISABELLA.

I will not answer!

ZIPPA.

Think what it is! Love is to you like music—
Pastime! You think on't when the dance is o'er—
When there's no revel —when your hair's unbound,
And its bright jewels with the daylight pale—
You want a lover to press on the hours
That lag till night again! But I—

ISABELLA.

Stop there!
I love him better than you've soul to dream of!

ZIPPA, (*rising.*)

'Tis false! How can you? He's to you a lamp
That shines amid a thousand just as bright!
What's one amid your crowd of worshippers?
The glow-worm's bright—but oh! 'tis wanton murder
To raise him to the giddy air you breathe,
And leave his mate in darkness!

ISABELLA.

Say the worm
Soar from the earth on his own wing—what then?

ZIPPA.

Fair reasons cannot stay the heart from breaking.
You've stol'n my life, and you can give it back!
Will you—for heaven's sweet pity?

ISABELLA.

Leave my presence
(*Aside.*) (I pity her—but on this fatal love
Hangs my life, too.) What right have such as you
To look with eyes of love on Angelo?

ZIPPA.

What right?

ISABELLA.

I say so Where's the miracle
Has made you fit to climb into the sky—
A moth—and look with love upon a star!

ZIPPA, (*mournfully.*)

I'm lowly-born, alas!

ISABELLA.

Your *soul's* low-born!
Forget your anger and come near me, Zippa,
For ere I'm done you'll wonder! Have you ever,
When Angelo was silent, mark'd his eye—
How, of a sudden, as 'twere touch'd with fire,
There glows unnatural light beneath the lid?

ZIPPA.

I have—I've thought it strange!

ISABELLA.

Have you walk'd with him
When he has turn'd his head, as if to list
To music in the air—but you heard none—

And presently a smile stole through his lips,
And some low words, inaudible to you,
Fell from him brokenly.

ZIPPA.

Ay—many times!

ISABELLA.

Tell me once more! Hast never heard him speak
With voice unlike his own—so melancholy,
And yet so sweet a voice, that, were it only
The inarticulate moaning of a bird,
The very tone of it had made you weep?

ZIPPA.

'Tis strangely true, indeed!

ISABELLA.

Oh heaven! You say so—
Yet never dreamt it was a spirit of light
Familiar with you!

ZIPPA.

How?

ISABELLA.

Why, there are seraphs
Who walk this common world, and want, as we do—
Here, in our streets—all seraph, save in wings—
The look, the speech, the forehead like a god—
And he the brightest!

ZIPPA, (*incredulously.*)

Nay—I've known him long!

ISABELLA.

Why, listen! There are worlds, thou doubting fool!
Farther to flee to than the stars in heaven,
Which Angelo can walk as we do this—
And does—while you look on him!

ZIPPA.

Angelo!

ISABELLA.

He's never at your side one constant minute
Without a thousand messengers from thence!
(O block! to live with him, and never dream on't!)
He plucks the sun's rays open like a thread,
And knows what stains the rose and not the lily—
He never sees a flower but he can tell
Its errand on the earth—(they all have errands—
You knew not that, oh dulness!) He sees shapes
Flush'd with immortal beauty in the clouds—
(You've seen him mock a thousand on his canvass,
And never wonder'd!) Yet you talk of love!
What love you?

ZIPPA.

Angelo—and not a dream!
Take you the dream and give me Angelo!

You may talk of him till my brain is giddy—
But oh, you cannot praise him out of reach
Of my true heart.—He's here, as low as I!—
Shall he not wed a woman, flesh and blood?

ISABELLA.

See here! There was a small, earth-creeping mole,
Born by the low nest of an unfledged lark.
They lived an April youth amid the grass—
The soft mole happy, and the lark no less,
And thought the bent sky leaned upon the flowers.
By early May the fledgling got his wings;
And, eager for the light, one breezy dawn,
Sprang from his nest, and, buoyantly, away
Fled forth to meet the morning. Newly born
Seem'd the young lark, as in another world
Of light, and song, and creatures like himself;
He soar'd and dropp'd, and sang unto the sun,
And pitied every thing that had not wings—
But most the mole, that wanted even eyes
To see the light he floated in!

ZIPPA.

Yet still
She watch'd his nest, and fed him when he came—
Would it were Angelo and I indeed!

ISABELLA.

Nay, mark! The bird grew lonely in the sky.

There was no echo at the height he flew!
And when the mist lay heavy on his wings
His song broke, and his flights were brief and low—
And the dull mole, that should have sorrowed with him,
Joy'd that he sang at last where she could hear!

ZIPPA.

Why, happy mole again!

ISABELLA.

Not long!—for soon
He found a mate that loved him *for his wings?*
One who with feebler flight, but eyes still on him,
Caught up his dropp'd song in the middle air,
And, with the echo, cheered him to the sun!

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

(I see! I see! His *soul* was never mine!
I was the blind mole of her hateful story!
No, no! he never loved me! True, we ate,
And laugh'd, and danced together—but no love—
He never told his thought when he was sad!
His folly and his idleness were mine—
No more! The rest was lock'd up in his soul!
I feel my heart grow black!) Fair madam, thank you!
You've told me news! (She shall not have him neither,
If there's a plot in hate to keep him from her!
I must have room to think, and air to breathe—
I choke here!) Madam, the blind mole takes leave!

ISABELLA.

Farewell! [*Exit Zippa.*

(*Takes the phial from the table.*)

And now, come forth, sweet comforter!
I'll to my chamber with this drowsy poison,
And from my sleep I wake up Angelo's
Or wake no more! [*Exit.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE I.

[*A sumptuous Drawing-room in the Falcone Palace. Guests assembled for the bridal. Lords and ladies promenading, and a band of musicians in a gallery at the side of the stage.*]

1st. LORD.

Are we before the hour? or does the bridegroom
Affect this tardiness?

2d. LORD.

We're bid at twelve.

1st. LORD.

'Tis now past one. At least we should have music
To wile the time. (*To the musicians.*) Strike up, good fellows!

2d. LORD.

Why,
A man who's only drest on holidays
Makes a long toilet. Now, I'll warrant, he
Has vex'd his tailor since the break of day,
Hoping to look a gentleman. D'ye know him?

1st. LORD.

I've never had occasion!

2d. LORD.

Poor Falcone!
He'd give the best blood in his veins, I think,
To say as much!

1st. LORD.

How's this! I see no stir
Among the instruments. Will they not play?

2d. LORD.

Not they! I ask'd before you, and they're bid
To strike up when they hear Tortesa's horses
Prance thro' the gateway—not a note till then!

(*Music plays.*)

1st. LORD.

He comes!

(*Enter Tortesa, dressed over-richly.*)

TORTESA.

Good day, my lords!

1st. LORD.

Good day!

2d. LORD.

The sky
Smiles on you, Signor! 'Tis a happy omen
They say, to wed in sunshine.

TORTESA.

Why, I think
The sun is not displeased that I should wed.

1st. LORD.

We're happy, sir, to have you one of us.

TORTESA.

What have I been *till now!* I was a man
Before I saw your faces! Where's the change?
Have I a tail since? Am I grown a monkey?
(Lords whisper together, and walk from him.)
Oh for a mint to coin the world again
And melt the mark of gentleman from clowns!
It puts me out of patience! Here's a fellow
That, by much rubbing against better men,
Has, like a penny in a Jew's close pocket,
Stolen the color of a worthier coin,
And thinks he rings like sterling courtesy!
Yet look! he cannot phrase you a good morrow,
Or say he's sad, or glad, at any thing,
But close beneath it, rank as verdigrease,
Lies an insulting rudeness! He was "*happy*"
That I should now be one of them. *Now!* Now!
As if, *till now*, I'd been a dunghill grub,
And was but just turn'd butterfly!

(*A Lady advances.*)

LADY.

Fair sir,

I must take leave to say, were you my brother,
You've made the choice that would have pleased me best!
Your bride's as good as fair.

TORTESA.

I thank you, Madam!
To be *your* friend, she should be—good and fair!

(*The Lady turns, and walks up the stage.*)

How like a drop of oil upon the sea
Falls the apt word of woman! So! her "brother!"
Why, there could be no contumely there!
I might, for all I *look* have been her brother,
Else her first thought had never coupled us.
I'll pluck some self-contentment out of that!

(*Enter suddenly the Count's Secretary.*)

How now!

SECRETARY.

I'm sent, sir, with unwelcome tidings.

TORTESA.

Deliver them the quicker!

SECRETARY.

I shall be
Too sudden at the slowest.

TORTESA.

Pshaw! what is't?
I'm not a girl! Out with your news at once!
Are my ships lost?

SECRETARY, (*hesitatingly.*)

The lady Isabella—

TORTESA.

What? run away!

SECRETARY.

Alas, good sir! she's dead!

TORTESA.

Bah! just as dead as I! Why, thou dull blockhead!
Cannot a lady faint, but there must be
A trumpeter like thee to make a tale on't?

SECRETARY.

Pardon me, Signor, but—

TORTESA.

Who sent you hither!

SECRETARY.

My lord the Count.

TORTESA, (*turning quickly aside.*)

He put it in the bond,
That if by any humour of my own,
Or accident that *sprang not from himself*,
Or from his daughter's will, the match were marr'd,
His tenure stood intact. If she *were* dead—
I don't believe she is—but if she were,
By one of those strange chances that do happen—
If she were dead, I say, the silly fish
That swims with safety among hungry sharks
To run upon the pin-hook of a boy,
Might teach me wisdom!

(The Secretary comes forward, narrating eagerly to the company.)

Now, what says this jackdaw?

SECRETARY.

She had refused to let her bridesmaids in—

LADY.

And died alone?

SECRETARY.

A trusty serving maid
Was with her, and none else. She dropp'd away,
The girl said, in a kind of weary sleep.

FIRST LORD.

Was no one told of it?

SECRETARY.

The girl watch'd by her,
And thought she slept still; till, the music sounding,
She shook her by the sleeve, but got no answer;
And so the truth broke on her!

TORTESA, (*aside.*)

(Oh indeed!
The plot is something shallow!)

SECOND LORD.

Might we go
And see her as she lies?

SECRETARY.

The holy father
Who should have married her, has check'd all comers,
And staying for no shroud but bridal dress,
He bears her presently to lie in state
In the Falcone chapel.

TORTESA, (*aside.*)

(Worse and worse—
They take me for a fool!)

FIRST LORD.

But why such haste?

SECRETARY.

I know not.

ALL

Let us to the chapel!

TORTESA.

(*Drawing his sword, and stepping between them and the door.*)

Hold!
Let no one try to pass!

FIRST LORD.

What mean you, sir!

TORTESA.

To keep you here till you have got your story
Pat to the tongue—the truth on't, and no more!

LADY.

Have you a doubt the bride is dead, good Signor?

TORTESA.

A palace, see you, has a tricky air!
When I am told a tradesman's daughter's dead,
I know the coffin holds an honest corse,
Sped, in sad earnest, to eternity.
But were I stranger in the streets to-day,
And heard that an ambitious usurer,
With lands and money having bought a lady
High-born and fair, she died before the bridal,
I would lay odds with him that told me of it
She'd rise again—before the resurrection.
So stand back all! If I'm to fill to-day
The pricking ears of Florence with a lie,
The bridal guests shall tell the tale so truly,
And mournfully, from eyesight of the corse,
That ev'n the shrewdest listener shall believe,
And I myself have no misgiving of it.
Look! where they come!

(*Door opens to funereal music, and the body of Isabella is borne in, preceded by a Monk, and followed by Falcone and mourners. Tortesa confronts the Monk.*)

What's this you bear away?

MONK.

Follow the funeral, but stay it not.

TORTESA.

If thereon lie the lady Isabella,
I ask to see her face before she pass!

MONK.

Stand from the way, my son, it cannot be!

TORTESA.

What right have you to take me for a stone?
See what you do! I stand a bridegroom here.
A moment since the joyous music playing
Which promised me a fair and blushing bride.
The flowers are fragrant, and the guests made welcome;
And while my heart beats at the opening door,
And eagerly I look to see her come,—
There enters in her stead a covered corse!
And when I ask to look upon her face—
One look, before my bride is gone for ever,—
You find it in your hearts to say me nay!—
Shame! Shame!

FALCONE, *(fiercely.)*

Lead on!

TORTESA.

My lord, by covenant—
By contract writ and seal'd—by value rendered—
By her own promise—nay, by all, save taking,
This body's mine! I'll have it set down here
And wait my pleasure! See it done, my lord,
Or I will, for you!

MONK, (*to the bearers.*)

Set the body down!

TORTESA, (*takes the veil from the face.*)

Come hither all! Nay, father, look not black!

If o'er the azure temper of this blade
There come no mist, when laid upon her lips,
I'll do a penance for irreverence,
And fill your sack with penitential gold!
Look well!

(*Puts his sword blade to Isabella's lips, and after watching it with intense interest a moment, drops on his knees beside the bier.*)

She's dead indeed! Lead on!

(*The procession starts again to funereal music, and Tortesa follows last.*)

SCENE II.

[*A Street in Florence. The funereal music dying away in the distance. Enter Zippa, straining her eyes to look after it.*]

ZIPPA.

'Tis Angelo that follows close behind,
Laying his forehead almost on her bier!
His heart goes with her to the grave! Oh Heaven!
Will not Tortesa pluck out of his hand
The tassel of that pall?

(*She hears a footstep.*)

Stay, stay, he's here!

(*Enter Tortesa, musing. Zippa stands aside.*)

TORTESA.

I've learned to-day a lord may be a Jew,
I've learned to-day that grief may kill a lady;
Which touches me the most I cannot say,
For I could fight Falcone for my loss,
Or weep, with all my soul, for Isabella.
(*Zippa touches him on the shoulder.*)

ZIPPA.

How is't the Signor follows not his bride?

TORTESA.

I did—but with their melancholy step
I fell to musing, and so dropp'd behind—
But here's a sight I have not seen to-day!
(*Takes her hand smilingly.*)

ZIPPA.

What's that?

TORTESA.

A friendly face, my honest Zippa!
Art well? What errand brings thee forth?

ZIPPA.

None, Signor!
But passing by the funeral, I stopped,
Wondering to see the bridegroom lag behind,
And give his sacred station next the corse
To an obtrusive stranger.

TORTESA.

Which is he?

ZIPPA, (*points after Angelo.*)

Look there!

TORTESA.

His face is buried in his cloak.
Who is't?

ZIPPA.

Not *know* him? Had I half the cause
That *you* have, to see through that mumming cloak,
The shadow of it would speak out his name!

TORTESA.

What mean you?

ZIPPA.

Angelo! What right has he
To weep in public at her funeral?

TORTESA.

The painter?

ZIPPA.

Ay—the peasant Angelo!
Was't not enough to dare to love her living,
But he must fling the insult of his tears
Betwixt her corse and you? Are you not mov'd?
Will you not go and pluck him from your place?

TORTESA.

No, Zippa! for my spirits are more apt
To grief than anger. I've in this half hour
Remember'd much I should have thought on sooner,—

For, had I known her heart was capable
Of breaking for the love of one so low,
I would have done as much to make her his
As I have done, in hate, to make her mine.
She lov'd him, Zippa! (*Walks back in thought.*)

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

Oh to find a way
To pluck that fatal beauty from his eyes!
'Tis twilight, and the lamp is lit above her,
And Angelo will watch the night out there,
Gazing with passionate worship on her face.
But no! he shall not!

TORTESA, (*advancing.*)

Come! what busy thought
Vexes your brain now?

ZIPPA.

Were your pride as quick
As other men's to see an insult, Signor!
I had been spared the telling of my thought.

TORTESA.

You put it sharply!

ZIPPA.

Listen! you are willing
That there should follow, in your place of mourner,
A youth, who, by the passion of his grief
Shews to the world he's more bereaved than you!

TORTESA.

Humph! well!

ZIPPA.

Still follows he without rebuke;
And in the chapel where she lies to-night,
Her features bared to the funereal lamp,
He'll, like a mourning bridegroom, keep his vigil,
As if all Florence knew she was his own.

TORTESA.

Nay, nay! he may keep vigil if he will!
The door is never lock'd upon the dead
Till bell and mass consign them to the tomb;
And custom gives the privilege to all
To enter in and pray—and so may he.

ZIPPA.

Then learn a secret which I fain had spared
My lips the telling. Question me not how,
But I have chanced to learn, that Angelo,
To-night, will *steal the body from its bier!*

TORTESA.

To-night! What! Angelo! Nay, nay, good Zippa!
If he's enamoured of the corse, 'tis there—
And he may watch it till its shape decay,
And holy church will call it piety.
But he who steals from consecrated ground,
Dies, by the law of Florence. There's no end
To answer in't.

ZIPPA.

You know not Angelo!
You think not with what wild, delirious passion
A painter thirsts to tear the veil from beauty.
He painted Isabella as a maid,
Coy as a lily turning from the sun.
Now she is dead, and, like a star that flew
Flashing and hiding thro' some fleecy rack,
But suddenly sits still in cloudless heavens,
She slumbers fearless in his steadfast gaze,
Peerless and unforbidding. O, to him
She is no more your bride! A statue fairer
Than ever rose enchanted from the stone,
Lies in that dim-lit chapel, clad like life.
Are you too slow to take my meaning yet?
He cannot loose the silken boddice *there!*
He cannot, *there*, upon the marble breast
Shower the dark locks from the golden comb!

TORTESA.

Hold!

ZIPPA.

Are you mov'd? Has he no *end* to compass
In stealing her away from holy ground?
Will you not lock your bride up from his touch?

TORTESA.

No more! no more! I thought not of all this!
Perchance it is not true. But twilight falls,

And I will home to doff this bridal gear,
And, after, set a guard upon the corse.
We'll walk together. Come!

ZIPPA, *(aside.)*

(He shall not see her!)

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

[*A Street in front of the Falcone Palace. Night. Enter Isabella in her white bridal dress. She falters to her father's door, and drops exhausted.*]

ISABELLA.

My brain swims round! I'll rest a little here!
The night's cold, chilly cold. Would I could reach
The house of Angelo! Alas! I thought
He would have kept *one* night of vigil near me,
Thinking me dead. Bear up, good heart! Alas!
I faint! Where am I? (*Looks around.*)
'Tis my father's door.
My undirected feet have brought me home—
And I must in, or die! (*Knocks with a painful effort.*)
So ends my dream!

FALCONE, (*from above.*)

Who's that would enter to a mourning house?

ISABELLA.

Your daughter!

FALCONE.

Ha! what voice is that I hear?

ISABELLA.

Poor Isabella's.

FALCONE.

Art thou come to tell me,
That with unnatural heart I killed my daughter?
Just Heaven! thy retribution follows fast!
But oh, if holy and unnumbered masses
Can give thee rest, perturb'd and restless spirit!
Haunt thou a weeping penitent no more!
Depart! I'll in, and pass the night in prayer!
So shalt thou rest! Depart!

(*He closes the window, and Isabella drops with her forehead to the marble stair.*)

(*Enter Tomaso, with a bottle in his hand.*)

TOMASO.

It's like the day after the deluge. Few stirring and nobody dry. I've been since twilight looking for somebody that would drink. Not a beggar athirst in all Florence! I thought that, with a bottle in my hand, I should be scented like a wild boar. I expected drunkards would have come up out of the ground—like worms in a shower. When was *I* ever

so difficult to find by a moist friend? Two hundred ducats in good wine, and no companion! I'll look me up a dry dog. I'll teach him to tipple, and give up the fellowship of mankind.

ISABELLA, (*faintly.*)

Signor!

TOMASO.

Hey! What!

ISABELLA.

Help, Signor!

TOMASO.

A woman! Ehem! (*approaching her.*) Would you take something to drink by any chance? (*Offers her the bottle.*) No? Perhaps you don't like to drink out of the bottle.

ISABELLA.

I perish of cold!

TOMASO.

Stay! Here's a cloak! My master's out for the night, and you shall home with me. Come! Perhaps when you get warmer, you'd like to drink a little. The wine's good! (*Assists her in rising,*) By St. Genevieve, a soft hand! Come! I'll bring you where there's fire and a clean flagon.

ISABELLA.

To any shelter, Signor.

TOMASO.

Shelter! nay, a good house, and two hundred ducats in ripe wine. Steady now! (This shall pass for a good action! If my master smell a rat, I'll face him out the woman's honest!) This way, now! Softly! That's well stepp'd! Come!

(*Goes out, assisting her to walk.*)

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE I.

[*Angelo's Studio. A full-length picture, in a large frame, stands on the floor against an easel, placed nearly in the centre of the room. Two curtains are so arranged as to cover the picture when drawn together. Angelo stands in an imploring attitude near the picture, his pencil and pallette in his hands, appealing to Isabella, who is partly turned from him in an attitude of refusal. The back wall of the room such as to form a natural ground for a picture.*]

ANGELO.

Hear me, sweet!

ISABELLA.

No, we'll keep a holiday,
And waste the hours in love and idleness.
You shall not paint to-day, dear Angelo!

ANGELO.

But listen!

ISABELLA.

Nay, I'm jealous of my picture ;
For all you give to that is stol'n from me.
I like not half a look that turns away
Without an answer from the eyes it met !
I care not you should see my lips' bright color
Yet wait not for the breath that floats between !

ANGELO.

Wilt listen ?

ISABELLA.

Listen ? Yes ! a thousand years !
But there's a pencil in those restless fingers,
Which you've a trick of touching to your lips—
And while you talk, my hand would do as well !
And if it's the same tale you told before
Of *certain vigils* you forgot to keep,
Look deep into my eyes till it is done—
For, like the children's Lady-in-the well,
I only hark because you're looking in !
Will you talk thus to me ?

ANGELO.

Come night I will !
But close upon thy voice, sweet Isabella !
A boding whisper sinks into mine ear
Which tells of sudden parting ! If 'tis false,—
We shall have still a lifetime for our love,
But if 'tis true, oh think that, in my picture,

Will lie the footprint of an angel gone!
Let me but make it clearer!

ISABELLA.

Now, by heaven!
I think thou lov'st the picture, and not me!
So different am I, that, did I think
To lose thee presently, by death or parting,
For thy least word, or look, or slightest motion—
Nay, for so little breath as makes a sigh,
I would not take, to have it pass untreasured,
The empire of a star!

(*While she was uttering this reproach, Angelo has looked at her with delight, and touched his portrait with a few rapid strokes.*)

ANGELO.

My picture's done!

(*Throws his pencil to the ground.*)

Break, oh enchanted pencil! thou wilt never
On earth, again, do miracle so fair!
Oh Isabella! as the dusky ore
Waits for the lightning's flash to turn to gold—
As the dull vapour waits for Hesperus,
Then falls in dew-drops and reflects a star—
So waited I that fire upon thy lips,
To make my master-piece complete in beauty!

ISABELLA.

This is ambition where I look'd for love;

The fancy flattering where the heart should murmur.
I think you have no heart!

ANGELO.

Your feet are on it!

The heart is ever lowly with the fortunes,
Tho' the proud mind sits level with a king!
I gave you long ago both heart and soul,
But only one has dared to speak to you!
Yet, if astonishment will cure the dumb,
Give it a kiss—

ISABELLA, (*smiling.*)

Lo! Where it speaks at last!

(*A loud knock is heard.*)

Hark, Angelo!

(*He flies to the window, and looks out.*)

ANGELO.

Tortesa with a guard!

Alas! that warning voice! They've traced thee hither!
Lost! Lost!

ISABELLA, (*Hastily drawing the curtain, and disappearing behind it.*)

No! no! defend thy picture only,
And all is well yet!

ANGELO.

Thee and it with life!

(*Draws his sword, and stands before the curtain in an attitude of defiance. Enter Tortesa with officers and guard.*)

What is your errand?

TORTESA.

I'm afraid, a sad one!
For, by your drawn sword and defying air,
Your conscious thought foretells it.

ANGELO.

Why,—a blow—
(You took one, Signor, when you last were here—
If you've forgot it, well!)—but, commonly,
The giver of a blow needs have his sword
Promptly in hand. You'll pardon me!

TORTESA.

I do!
For, if my fears are just, good Signor painter!
You've not a life to spare upon a quarrel!
In brief, the corse of a most noble lady
Was stol'n last night from holy sanctuary.
I have a warrant here to search your house;
And, should the body not be found therein,
I'm bid to see the picture of the lady—
Whereon, (pray mark me!) if I find a trace
Of charms fresh copied, more than may beseem
The modest beauty of a living maid,
I may arrest you on such evidence
For instant trial!

ANGELO.

Search my house and welcome!
But, for my picture, tho' a moment's glance

Upon its pure and hallowed loveliness
Would give the lie to your foul thought of me,
It is the unseen virgin of my brain!
And as th' inviolate person of a maid
Is sacred ev'n in presence of the law,
My picture is my own—to bare or cover!
Look on it at your peril!

TORTESA, (*to the guard.*)

Take his sword.

(*The guards attack and disarm him.*)

ANGELO.

Coward and villain!

(*Tortesa parts the curtains with his sword, and Angelo starts amazed to see Isabella, with her hands crossed on her breast, and her eyes fixed on the ground, standing motionless in the frame which had contained his picture. The tableau deceives Tortesa, who steps back to contemplate what he supposes to be the portrait of his bride.*)

TORTESA.

Admirable work!
'Tis Isabella's self! Why, this is wondrous!
The brow, the lip, the countenance—how true!
I would have sworn that gloss upon the hair,
That shadow from the lash, were nature's own—
Impossible to copy! (*Looks at it a moment in silence.*)
Yet methinks
The color on the cheek is something faint!

ANGELO, (*hurriedly.*)

Step this way farther!

TORTESA, (*changing his position.*)

Ay—'tis better here!
The hand is not as white as Isabella's—
But painted to the life! If there's a feature
That I would touch again, the lip, to me,
Seems wanting in a certain scornfulness
Native to *her!* It scarcely marr'd her beauty.
Perhaps 'tis well slurr'd over in a picture!
Yet stay! I see it, now I look again!
How excellently well!

(*Guards return from searching the house.*)

What! found you nothing?

SOLDIER, (*holding up Isabella's veil.*)

This bridal veil—no more.

ANGELO, (*despairingly.*)

Oh! luckless star!

TORTESA.

Signor! you'll trust me when I say I'm sorry
With all my soul! This veil, I know it well—
Was o'er the face of that unhappy lady
When laid in sanctuary. You are silent!
Perhaps you scorn to satisfy me here!
I trust you can—in your extremity!
But I must bring you to the Duke! Lead on!

ANGELO.

An instant!

TORTESA, (*courteously*).

At your pleasure!

ANGELO, (*to Isabella, as he passes close to her.*)

I conjure you,

By all our love, stir not!

ISABELLA, (*still motionless.*)

Farewell!

(*Tortesa motions for Angelo to precede him with the guard, looks once more at the picture, and with a gesture expressive of admiration, follows. As the door closes, Isabella steps from the frame.*)

ISABELLA.

I'll follow

Close on thy steps, beloved Angelo!
And find a way to bring thee home again!
My heart is light, and hope speaks cheerily!
And lo! bright augury!—a friar's hood
For my disguise! Was ever omen fairer!
Thanks! my propitious star!

(*Envelopes herself in the hood, and goes out hastily.*)

SCENE II.

[*A Street. Enter Tomaso, with his hat crushed and pulled sulkily over his eyes, his clothes dirty on one side, and other marks of having slept in the street. Enter Zippa from the other side, meeting him.*]

ZIPPA.

Tomaso! Is't thou? Where's Angelo?

TOMASO.

It is I, and I don't know!

ZIPPA.

Did he come home last night?

TOMASO.

"*Did* he come home!" Look *there!* (*Pulls off his hat and shows his dirty side.*)

ZIPPA.

Then thou hast slept in the street!

TOMASO.

Ay!

ZIPPA.

And what has that to do with the coming home of Angelo?

TOMASO.

What had thy father to do with thy having such a nose as his?

(*Zippa holds up a ducat to him.*)

What! gave thy mother a ducat?—cheap as dirt!

ZIPPA.

Blockhead, no! I'll give thee the ducat if thou wilt tell me, straight on, what thou know'st of Angelo!

TOMASO.

I will—and thou shalt see how charity is rewarded.

ZIPPA.

Begin!—begin!

TOMASO

Last night, having pray'd later than usual at vespers——

ZIPPA.

Ehem!

TOMASO.

I was coming home in a pious frame of mind—

ZIPPA.

——And a bottle in thy pocket.

TOMASO.

No!—in my hand. What should I stumble over——

ZIPPA.

——But a stone.

TOMASO.

A woman!

ZIPPA.

Fie! what's this you're going to tell me?

TOMASO.

She was dying with cold. Full of Christian charity—

ZIPPA.

——And new wine.

TOMASO.

Old wine, Zippa! The wine was old!

ZIPPA.

Well!

TOMASO.

I took her home.

ZIPPA.

Shame!—at thy years?

TOMASO.

And Angelo being out for the night——

ZIPPA.

There! there! you may skip the particulars.

TOMASO.

I say. my own bed being in the garret——

ZIPPA.

Well, well!

TOMASO.

I put her into Angelo's.

ZIPPA.

Oh, unspeakable impudence! Didst thou do that?

TOMASO.

I had just left her to make a wine posset, (for she was well nigh dead), when in popped my master,—finds her there—asks no questions,—kicks me into the street, and locks the door! *There's* the reward of virtue!

ZIPPA.

Did he not turn out the woman, too?

TOMASO.

Not as I remember.

ZIPPA.

Oh worse and worse! And thou hast not seen him since?

TOMASO.

I found me a soft stone, said my prayers, and went to sleep.

ZIPPA.

And hast thou not seen him to day?

TOMASO.

Partly, I have!

ZIPPA.

Where? Tell me quickly!

TOMASO.

Give me the ducat.

ZIPPA, (*gives it him.*)

Quick! say on!

TOMASO.

I have a loose recollection, that, lying on that stone, Angelo called me by name. Looking up, I saw two Angelos, and two Tortesas, and soldiers with two spears each. (*He figures in the air with his finger as if trying to remember.*)

ZIPPA, (*aside.*)

(Ha! he is apprehended for the murder of Isabella. Say that my evidence might save his life! Not unless he love me!) Which way went he, Tomaso?

(*Tomaso points.*)

This way? (Then has he gone to be tried before the Duke.) Come with me, Tomaso! Come.

TOMASO.

Where?

ZIPPA.

To the Duke's palace! Come! (*Takes his arm.*)

TOMASO.

To the Duke's palace? There'll be kicking of heels in the ante-chamber!—dry work! I'll spend thy ducat as we go along. Shall it be old wine, or new?

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

[*Hall of Judgment in the Ducal Palace. The Duke upon a raised throne on the left. Falcone near his chair, and Angelo on the opposite side of the stage with a guard. Isabella behind the guard, disguised as a monk. Tortesa stands near the centre of the stage, and Zippa and Tomaso in the left corner, listening eagerly. Counsellors at a table, and crowd of spectators at the sides and rear.*]

DUKE.

Are there more witnesses?

COUNSELLOR.

No more, my liege!

DUKE.

None for the prisoner?

COUNSELLOR.

He makes no defence
Beyond a firm denial.

FALCONE.

Is there wanting
Another proof, my liege, that he is guilty?

DUKE.

I fear he stands in deadly peril, Count.
(*To the Counsellor.*) Sum up the evidence.
(*He reads.*)

COUNSELLOR.

'Tis proved, my liege,
That for no honest or sufficient end,
The pris'ner practised on your noble Grace
And Count Falcone a contrived deceit,
Whereby he gained admittance to the lady.

(*Tomaso exhibits signs of alarm.*)

DUKE.

Most true!

COUNSELLOR.

That, till the eve before her death,
He had continual access to the palace;
And, having grown enamoured of the bride,
Essay'd by plots that never were matured,
And quarrels often forced on her betrothed,
To stay the bridal. That, against the will
Of her most noble father and the Duke,
The bride was resolute to keep her troth;
And so, preparing for the ceremony,
Upon her bridal morning was found dead.
'Tis proved again—that, while she lay in state,
The guard, at several periods of the night,
Did force the pris'ner from the chapel door;
And when the corse was stol'n from sanctuary
All search was vain, till, in the pris'ner's hands
Was found the veil that shrouded her. To these,
And lighter proofs of sacrilege and murder,

The prisoner has opposed his firm denial——
No more!

DUKE.

Does no one speak in his behalf?

TORTESA.

My liege! so far as turns the evidence
Upon the prisoner's quarrels with myself,
I'm free to say that they had such occasion
As any day may rise 'twixt men of honor.
As one of those aggriev'd by his offences,
You'll wonder I'm a suitor for his pardon—
But so I am! Besides that there is room
To hope him innocent, your Grace's realm
Holds not so wondrous and so rare a painter!
If he has killed the lady Isabella,
'Tis some amends that in his glorious picture
She's made immortal! If he stole her corse,
He can return, for that disfigured dust,
An Isabella fresh in changeless beauty!
Were it not well to pardon him, my Lord?

ISABELLA, (*aside.*)

Oh brave Tortesa!

DUKE.

You have pleaded kindly
And eloquently, Signor! but the law
Can recognize no gift as plea for pardon.
For his rare picture he will have his fame;

But if the Isabella he has painted
Find not a voice to tell his innocence,
He dies at sunset!

ISABELLA, (*despairingly.*)

He is dead to *me!*

Yet he shall live!

(She drops the cowl from her shoulders, and with her arms folded, walks slowly to the feet of the Duke.)

FALCONE, (*rushing forward.*)

My daughter!

ANGELO, (*with a gesture of agony.*)

Lost!

TORTESA.

Alive!

ZIPPA, *(energetically.)*

Tortesa 'll have her!

(Isabella retires to the back of the stage with her father and kneels to him, imploring in dumb show; the Duke and others watching.)

TORTESA, (*aside.*)

So! all's right again?
Now for my lands or Isabella?—Stay!
'Tis a brave girl by Heaven!

(Reflects a moment.)

A sleeping draught,
And so to Angelo! Her love for *me*

A counterfeit to take suspicion off!
It was well done! I feel my heart warm to her!
(Reflects again.)
Where could he hide her from our search to-day?
(Looks round at Isabella.)
No? Yet the dress is like! It *was* the picture!
Herself—and *not* a picture! Now, by Heaven,
A girl like that should be the wife of Cæsar!
(Presses his hand upon his heart.)
I've a new feeling here!
(Falcone comes forward, followed by Isabella with gestures of supplication.)

FALCONE.

I will not hear you!
My liege, I pray you keep the prisoner
In durance till my daughter's fairly wed.
He has contriv'd against our peace and honor,
And howsoe'er this marvel be made clear,
She stands betroth'd, if he is in the mind,
To the brave Signor yonder!

DUKE.

This were well—
What says Tortesa?

TORTESA.

If my liege permit,
I will address my answer to this lady.

(*Turns to Isabella.*)

For reasons which I need not give you now,
Fair Isabella! I became your suitor.
My motives were unworthy you and me—
Yet I was true—I never said I lov'd you!
Your father sold you me for lands and money—
(Pardon me Duke! And you, fair Isabella!
You will—ere I am done!) I push'd my suit!
The bridal day came on, and clos'd in mourning;
For the fair bride it dawn'd upon was dead.
I had my shame and losses to remember—
But in my heart sat sorrow uppermost,
And pity—for I thought your heart was broken.
(*Isabella begins to discover interest in his story, and Angelo watches her with jealous eagerness.*)
I see you here again! You are my bride!
Your father holds me to my bargain for you!
The lights are burning on the nuptial altar—
The bridal chamber and the feast, all ready!
What stays the marriage now?—*my new-born love!*
That nuptial feast were fruit from Paradise—
I cannot touch it till *you* bid me welcome!
That nuptial chamber were the lap of Heaven——
I cannot enter till *you* call me in!

(*Takes a ring from his bosom.*)

Here is the golden ring you should have worn.
Tell me to give it to my rival there—
I'll break my heart to do so! (*Holds it towards Angelo.*)

ISABELLA, (*looking at her father.*)

Would I might!

TORTESA.

You shall if't please you!

FALCONE.

I command thee, never!

My liege, permit me to take home my daughter!
And, Signor, you—if you would keep your troth—
To-morrow come, and end this halting bridal!
Home! Isabella! (*Takes his daughter's hand.*)

TORTESA, (*taking it from him*).

Stay! she is not your's!

(*Turns to the Duke.*)

My gracious liege, there is a law in Florence,
That if a father, for no guilt or shame,
Disown, and shut his door upon his daughter,
She is the child of him who succors her;
Who, by the shelter of a single night,
Becomes endowed with the authority
Lost by the other. Is't not so?

DUKE.

So runs
The law of Florence, and I see your drift—
For, look my lord! (*to Falcone,*) if that dread apparition
You saw last night, was this your living daughter,
You stand within the peril of that law.

FALCONE.

My liege!

ISABELLA, (*looking admiringly at Tortesa.*)

Oh noble Signor!

TORTESA, (*to Isabella.*)

Was't well done?

Shall I give Angelo the ring?

(*As she is about to take it from him, Tomaso steps in behind, and pulls Isabella by the sleeve.*)

TOMASO.

Stay there!

What wilt thou do for dowry? I'm thy father?

But—save some flasks of wine—

ISABELLA, (*sorrowfully.*)

Would I were richer

For thy sake, Angelo!

(*Tortesa looks at her an instant, and then steps to the table and writes.*)

ANGELO, (*coming forward with an effort.*)

Look, Isabella!

I stand between thee and a life of sunshine.

Thou wert both rich and honor'd, *but for me!*

That thou *couldst* wed me, beggar as I am,

Is bliss to think on—but see how I rob thee!

I have a loving heart—but am a beggar!

There is a loving heart—

(*Points to Tortesa.*)

—with wealth and honor!

(*Tortesa steps between them, and hands a paper to Angelo.*)

TORTESA, (*to Isabella.*)

Say thou wilt wed the poorer?

ISABELLA, (*offers her hand to Angelo.*)

So I will!

TORTESA.

Then am I blest, for he's as rich as I—
Yet, in his genius, has one jewel more!

ISABELLA.

What sayst thou?

(*Angelo reads earnestly.*)

TORTESA.

In a mortal quarrel, lady!
'Tis thought ill-luck to have the better sword;
For the good angels, who look sorrowing on,
In heavenly pity take the weaker side!

ISABELLA.

What is it, Angelo?

ANGELO.

A deed to *me*
Of the Falcone palaces and lands,
And all the moneys forfeit by your father!—
By Heaven, I'll not be mock'd!

TORTESA.

The deed is yours—
What mockery in that?

ISABELLA, (*tenderly to Tortesa*).

It is not kind
To make a refusal of your love a pain!

TORTESA.

I would 'twould *kill* you to refuse me lady!
So should the blood plead for me at your heart!
Shall I give up the ring? (*offers it.*)

ISABELLA, (*hesitatingly.*)

Let me look on it!

TORTESA, (*withdrawing it.*)

A moment yet! You'll give it ere you think!
Oh is it fair that Angelo had *days*,
To tell his love, and I have not *one hour?*
How know you that I cannot love as well?

ISABELLA.

'Tis possible!

TORTESA.

Ah! thanks!

ISABELLA.

But I have given
My heart to him!

TORTESA.

You gave your *troth* to me!
If, of these two gifts you must take back one,
Rob not the poorer! Shall I keep the ring?

(*Isabella looks down.*)

ANGELO.

She hesitates! I've waited here too long!

(*Tears the deed in two.*)

Perish your gift, and farewell Isabella!

ISABELLA, (*advancing a step with clasp'd hands.*)

You'll kill me, Angelo! Come back!

TORTESA, (*seizing him by the hand as he hesitates and flinging him back with a strong effort.*)

He shall!

ANGELO.

Stand from my path! Or, if you care to try
Some other weapon than a glozing tongue,
Follow me forth where we may find the room!

TORTESA.

You shall not go.

ANGELO, (*draws.*)

Have at thee then!

(*Attacks Tortesa, who disarms him, and holds his sword-point to his breast. Duke and others come forward.*)

TORTESA.

The bar
'Twixt me and heaven, boy! is the life I hold
Now at my mercy! Take it, Isabella!
And with it the poor gift he threw away!
I'll write a new deed ere you've time to marry.
So take your troth back with your bridal ring,
And thus I join you!

(*Takes Isabella's hand, but Angelo refuses his.*)

ANGELO, (*proudly.*)

Never! But for me,
The hand you hold were joyfully your own!
Shall I receive a life and fortune from you,
Yet stand 'twixt you and *that?*

ISABELLA, (*turning from Angelo.*)

Thou dost not love me!

TORTESA.

Believe it not! He does! An instant more
I'll brush this new spun cobweb from his eyes.

(*Approaches Zippa.*)

Fair Zippa! in this cross'd and tangled world
Few wed the one they could have lov'd the best,
And fewer still wed well for happiness!
We each have lost to-day what best we love.
But as the drops, that mingled in the sky

Are torn apart in the tempestuous sea,
Yet with a new drop tremble into one,
We two, if you're content, may swim together!
What say you?

ZIPPA, (*giving her hand.*)

I have thought on it before,
When I believed you cold and treacherous,
'Tis easy when I know you kind and noble.

TORTESA.

To-morrow, then, we'll wed; and now, fair Signor,
(*To Angelo.*)
Take you her hand, nor fear to rob Tortesa!
(*Turns to the Duke.*)
Shall it be so, my liege?

DUKE.

You please me well.
And if you'll join your marriage feasts together
I'll play my part and give the brides away!

TORTESA.

Not so, my liege! I could not see her *wed him.*
To *give her to him* has been all I could;
For I have sought her with the dearest pulses
That quicken in my heart, my *love and scorn.*
She's taught me that the high-born may be true.
I thank her for it—but, too close on that
Follow'd the love, whose lightning flash of honor

Brightens, but straight is dark again! My liege!
The poor who leap up to the stars for duty
Must drop to earth again! and here, if't please you,
I take my feet for ever from your palace,
And, match'd as best beseems me, say farewell.

(*Takes Zippa's hand, and the curtain drops.*)

THE END.

TWO WAYS OF DYING FOR A HUSBAND.

DYING TO LOSE HIM;

OR,

BIANCA VISCONTI.

TO HER

WHOSE PRAISE IS THE FIRST SOUGHT AND THE DEAREST,

To his Wife,

THE AUTHOR DEDICATES THIS PLAY.

PREFACE.

The play of Bianca Visconti was written for Miss Clifton, of the Park Theatre, New York, who produced it in all the principal cities of America, some two years since. Her personation of Bianca was, by the critics of every stage, pronounced a high triumph in her Art. The Author could not, with justice, publish it in England without recording the taste and talent with which she graced its first introduction to the public.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Francesco Sforza—*A Condottiero of the 14th century, afterwards Duke of Milan.*

Brunorio—*His Lieutenant.*

Sarpellione—*Ambassador at Milan from Alfonso, king of Naples.*

Rossano—*A Milanese Captain, formerly companion in arms to Sforza.*

Pasquali—*A whimsical Poet.*

*** *** ***

Bianca Visconti—*Daughter of Philip Visconti,* the bed-ridden Duke of Milan, and heiress-apparent to the crown.*

Giulio—*Her Page, afterwards discovered to be her brother and heir to the crown.*

Fiametta—*Waiting Woman to Bianca, and partial to Pasquali. Lords of Council, Priest, Messengers, Sentinels, &c.*

* This eccentric Duke, the last of the Viscontis, passed the latter part of his life in utter seclusion, seen by no one but his physician. His habits were loathsome, and his character harsh and unnatural.

BIANCA VISCONTI.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.

[*Pasquali the poet's chamber. Fiametta mending his hose while he writes.*]

FIAMETTA.

Why dost thou never write verses upon me?

PASQUALI.

Didst thou ever hear of a cauliflower struck by lightning?

FIAMETTA.

If there were honesty in verses, thou wouldst sooner write of me than of Minerva thou talkst of. Did she ever mend thy hose for thee?

PASQUALI.

There is good reason to doubt if Minerva ever had hose on her leg.

FIAMETTA.

There now! She can be no honest woman! I thought so when thou saidst she was most willing at night.

PASQUALI.

If thy ignorance were not endless, I would instruct thee in the meanings of poetry. But thou'lt call Jupiter a cow driver, till the thunderbolt thou takest for a bunch of twigs, strike thee dead for profanity. This once understand: Minerva is no *woman*, but *wit;* and when the poet speaks of unwilling Minerva, he talks of sluggish wit—that hath nothing to do with chastity.

FIAMETTA.

Are there two names for all things then, Master Pasquali?

PASQUALI.

Ay—nearly.

FIAMETTA.

What is the learned name for honest wife?

PASQUALI.

Spouse.

FIAMETTA.

When shall I be thy spouse then?

PASQUALI.

When thou canst make up thy mind to forego all hope of living in poetry.

FIAMETTA.

Nay, if I am not to be put in verse, I may as well have a plain man for a husband.

PASQUALI.

If thou wouldst be put in verse, thou shalt have no husband at all.

FIAMETTA.

Now, wilt thou tell me why—in good common words, Master Pasquali?

PASQUALI.

Thus:—dost thou think Petrarch had e'er made Laura so famous if she had been honestly his wife?

FIAMETTA.

An she were thrifty, I think he might.

PASQUALI.

I tell thee no! His sonnets had then been as dull as the praises of the just. No man would remember them.

FIAMETTA.

Can no honest women be famous then?

PASQUALI.

Virtue disqualifies. There is no hope for her in poetry if she be not a sinner. Mention me the most famous woman in history.

FIAMETTA.

Helen of Troy, in the ballad, I think.

PASQUALI.

Wouldst thou be more virtuous than she?

FIAMETTA.

Nay—that were presumption.

PASQUALI.

Knowst thou why she is sung in an Iliad? I will tell thee: being the wife to Menelaus, she ran away with the prince of Troy.

FIAMETTA.

Then is it a shame to remember her.

PASQUALI.

So thou sayst in thy ignorance. Yet for that sin she hath been remembered near three thousand years. Look through all poetry, and thou'lt find it thrives upon making sinners memorable. To be famous, thou must sin. Wilt thou qualify?

[*A rap at the door.*]

PAGE.

Master Pasquali! Master Pasquali!

FIAMETTA.

Holy Virgin! it is my mistress's page. An' I be found here now, I were as qualified as Helen of Troy.

[*She conceals herself. Enter the Page.*]

PASQUALI.

How now, Master Giulio! Thou'rt impatient.

PAGE.

Hey! Pasquali! If thou hadst been a prince, I had not been kept longer at the door.

PASQUALI.

If thou wert of age to relish true philosophy, I could prove to thee that the poet were the better waited for of the two. But what is thy errand?

PAGE.

A song—I want a new song!

PASQUALI.

To what tune?

PAGE.

To a new tune on the old theme. Could I tell thee a secret without danger now! Hast thou ne'er a cat that will mew it out?

PASQUALI.

No! not even a wall that has ears. What is thy news?

PAGE.

My mistress Bianca hath lost all taste for my singing!

PASQUALI.

A pin's head might pay for that news.

PAGE.

But, good Pasquali, wilt thou not write me a new song?

PASQUALI.

Upon what theme?

PAGE.

Sforza—still Sforza! But it must be melancholy.

PASQUALI.

Why melancholy?

PAGE.

Did I not tell thee once in confidence that she loved him?

PASQUALI.

Ay—and I writ a song in his praise.

PAGE.

I now tell thee in confidence that she hath lost him; for she is to marry Lionel of Ferrara!

PASQUALI.

Here's news indeed.

PAGE.

It's the Duke's will, and my lady is grieved to the degree I tell thee. She'll have none of my music. Wilt thou write me the song?

PASQUALI.

Must it be mournful, say you?

PAGE.

Ay—as the jug-jug of her nightingale. She's full of tears. Wilt thou write it now? Shall I hold the ink while thou writest it?

PASQUALI.

Bless the boy's wits! Dost thou think songs are made like pancakes, by turning the hand over?

PAGE.

Why, is't not in thy head?

PASQUALI.

Ay—it is.

PAGE.

And how long will it take thee to write eight lines upon parchment?

PASQUALI.

Not long—if Minerva were willing.

PAGE.

Shall I have it by vespers then?

PASQUALI.

Ay—if thou wilt leave me presently.

PAGE.

Farewell then! Let it be melancholy, good Pasquali.

[*Exit.*

[*Fiametta comes out.*]

FIAMETTA.

Now must I hurry to my Mistress, ere that monkey-page gets to the palace.

PASQUALI.

Stands he well with her?

FIAMETTA.

If he were her born child, she could not love him more. She fancies the puppy dog has an eye of her color, Good day, Master Pasquali!

PASQUALI.

Stay! will she marry this Lionel, think you?

FIAMETTA.

Can you know anything by tears?

PASQUALI.

Not so much by a woman's—but doth your lady weep?

FIAMETTA.

Ay—like an aqueduct!

PASQUALI.

Then it's more like she loves than hates him!

FIAMETTA.

Now, enlighten me that!

PASQUALI.

Thus:—a woman, if she be a lady (for clowns like thee, are of a constitution more dull and reasonable;)—a lady, I say, hath usually in her composition, two spirits—one angelical, the other diabolical. Now, if you stir me up the devil, he will frown—but if you touch me the angel, he will weep! If your lady weep, therefore, it is more like this match hath waked the angel than stirr'd the devil—for I never saw woman yet, who, if her heart

were cross'd, would not play the devil ere she knock'd under!

FIAMETTA.

How can'st thou think such brave thoughts on what does not concern thee!

PASQUALI.

Does it concern me if I shall live for ever?

FIAMETTA.

Surely it doth!

PASQUALI.

By what shall I live then?

FIAMETTA.

By faith in the catechism, I think!

PASQUALI.

By poetry, I tell thee! And now digest this paradox! Tho' poetry be full of lies, it is unworthy to be called poetry if it be not true as prophecy!

FIAMETTA.

But how can that be true which is false?

PASQUALI.

I will show thee! Thy lady's page would have a song, now, full of lamentation for Sforza. In it, I should say, the heavens wept—(which would be a lie)—that the winds whispered mournfully his name, (which would be a lie,) and that life without him were but music out of tune, (which would be a consummate lie!) Yet if she loved

Sforza, see you not that my verses, which are nothing but lies, have a poetic truth. When if she love him not—they are poetically false!

FIAMETTA.

'Tis like thy flatteries then! When thou sayst my cheek is like a peach, it is true, because it hath down upon it, and so hath a peach—yet it is false—because my cheek hath no stone it!

PASQUALI.

Let me taste the savour of that peach. Thou art wiser than I thought thee.

FIAMETTA.

I must go now.

PASQUALI.

Find me out if she love him! I would fain write no more verses on Sforza—whom I hate that he hath only a brute courage, and no taste for poesy. Now, Lionel's father was Petrarch's friend, and thy lady loving my verses, it were more convenient if she loved Lionel, who would love them too. Go thy ways now.

FIAMETTA.

Farewell, Master Pasquali!

PASQUALI.

Stay—there be rude men in this poor quarter, I will come with thee to the piazza. Come along, Mistress!

SCENE II.

[*The Camp before Milan. The tent of Sforza at the side, and watchfires in the distance. Enter Sforza and Brunorio.*]

SFORZA.

Is the guard set?

BRUNORIO.

All set, my Lord!

SFORZA.

And blaze
The watch-fires where I ordered?

BRUNORIO.

Every one.
Hold you your purpose, Sir?

SFORZA.

To-night, at twelve,
I will set on! This fickle Duke of Milan
Has changed for the last time. Brunorio!

BRUNORIO.

You seem disturb'd, Sir.

SFORZA.

I would have to-night
The best blood up that ever rose for Sforza.
Are your spears resolute?

BRUNORIO.

As yourself, my Lord!

SFORZA.

We'll sleep in Milan then. By heav'n I know not
Why I have waited on the changing pleasure
Of this old Duke so long.

BRUNORIO.

Twelve years ago
He promised you his daughter.

SFORZA.

Did he not?
And every year he has renew'd and broken
This promise of alliance.

BRUNORIO.

Can you hold
Milan against the Florentine, my Lord?
'Tis said the fair Bianca is betroth'd
To their ally Ferrara! They will join
Naples against you, and cry out "usurper!"

SFORZA.

Ay—I have thought on't. I'm the *second* Sforza!
The *first* hew'd wood! *There* lies enough to bar me,
Were I another Cæsar, from authority!
'Tis by this whip I have been driv'n so long—
'Tis by the bait of this old man's alliance

I have for ten years fought the wars of Milan.
They've fool'd me, year by year, and still found means
With their curs'd policy, to put me off—
And, by the saints, they've reason. Could I point
The world to such a thread 'twixt me and Milan
As weaves a spider thro' the summer air,
I'd hang a crown upon it. Once possess'd
Of a fair seat in Lombardy, my spears
Would glisten in St. Mark's!

BRUNORIO.

And thence to Naples!

SFORZA.

Ay—with what speed we might! My brave lieutenant,
You echo my own thought!

[*Enter a Sentinel.*]

SENTINEL.

A flag of truce
By torch-light comes from Milan.

[*Enter Sarpellione, in haste.*]

SARPELLIONE.

Noble Sforza!
I've rudely used my privilege to seek you!

SFORZA.

By right of office you are ever welcome.

SARPELLIONE.

If I might speak to you a timely word
In haste and privacy?

SFORZA.

Brunorio, leave us!

SARPELLIONE.

A flag of truce comes presently from Milan
With terms of peace. The Duke would give his daughter
To save his capital.

SFORZA.

The Duke does well!

SARPELLIONE.

You'll wed her then!

SFORZA.

If fairly offer'd me,
Free of all other terms, save peace between us,
I'll wed her freely.

SARPELLIONE.

Then I pray you pardon!
You're not the Sforza that should be the son
Of him who made the name!

SFORZA.

Bold words, ambassador!
But you are politic, and speak advisedly.
What bars my marriage with Duke Philip's daughter?

SARPELLIONE.

Brief—for this herald treads upon my heels—
Bianca was not born in wedlock!

SFORZA.

Well!

SARPELLIONE.

She's been betrothed to other suitors—

SFORZA.

Well!

SARPELLIONE.

Is't well that you can ne'er thro' her inherit
The ducal crown? Is't well to have a wife
Who has made up her mind to other husbands—
Who has been sold to every paltry prince
'Twixt Sicily and Venice?

SFORZA.

Is that all?

SARPELLIONE.

No—nor the best of it. *There lives a son,*
By the same mother, to the Duke of Milan.

SFORZA, (*seizing him by the arm.*)

Said you a son?

SARPELLIONE.

A son!—and—had I time—

SFORZA.

Without there! Pray the embassy from Milan
To grant me but a moment.

[*Turning to Sarpellione*]
Is it sure?

SARPELLIONE.

Upon the honor of my royal master,
Who'll make it good.

SFORZA.

Have you authority
For what you say?

SARPELLIONE.

In court or camp, Alfonso
Will prove this story true. His mother fled,
As the world knows—in peril of her life—
To Naples.

SFORZA.

From the jealousy of the Duke—
I well remember.

SARPELLIONE.

Ere he could demand her
From young Alfonso, newly king, she died;
But in her throes brought prematurely forth
A son; whom, fearing for his life, she hid,
And rear'd him, ever like a Prince, till now.

SFORZA.

Some fourteen years.

SARPELLIONE.

Scarce that—but he is forward,
And feels his blood already.

SFORZA.

Say he does—
What make you out of it to change my purpose?

SARPELLIONE.

Seeing you cannot thrive by conquering Milan,
Which Milan's allies will pluck back from you
To put the prince upon his father's seat—
My royal master wishes you forewarned.

SFORZA.

He's kind—if that is all!

SARPELLIONE.

He'd make a friend
Of the best sword in Italy.

SFORZA.

What scheme
Lies under this?

SARPELLIONE.

No scheme—but your own glory!
Your star stoops to the south. Alfonso's army
Gathers at Capua to war on Florence!
(*More earnestly.*) He'll add Ravenna to your marquisate
For but a thousand spears!

SFORZA.

I'll take Ravenna
Without his leave! Admit the herald there!
No, Count! your policy has overshot!
The King Alfonso needs no spears of mine—
But he would have them farther off from Milan—
A blind mole would see that!

SARPELLIONE.

My Lord! My Lord!

SFORZA.

Hear me, Sarpellione! I have been
Too long the sport of your fine policy!
With promises of power and fair alliance
I've fought for every prince in Italy—
And *against* all, in turn; now leagued with Venice
To beat back Florence from the Brenta; now
With Florence against Milan; then with Milan
To drive the Tuscan home again, and all
For my *own glory*, by some politic reason.
I'll have a place—or I'll be in the track on't—
Where the poor honor that my hand may pluck
Shall be well garner'd. By Visconti's daughter
I'll set my foot in Milan. My poor laurels,
Such as they are, shall root there!—and, by heaven,
I'll find a way to make their branches flourish!
Call in the herald, there!

SARPELLIONE.

But Lionel,
Prince of Ferrara, whom Bianca loves —

SFORZA.

Glory has been my mistress many years
And will suffice me still. If it should chance
Bianca loves another, 'tis an evil
To wed with *me*, which I will recompense
With chainless freedom after. In my glory
She'll find a bright veil that will hide all errors,
Save from the heart that pardons her.

SARPELLIONE.

Farewell!
You'll hear o' the young Prince soon!

SFORZA.

I'll never wrong him—
If there be one! —Our stars will rise together!
There's room enough!

[*Exit Sarpellione and enter Rossano.*]

Fair welcome, brave Rossano!
I know your news.

ROSSANO.

The Duke sends greeting to you—

SFORZA.

And offers me his daughter—is't not so?

ROSSANO.

Seeing your preparations as I came
I marvel you anticipate so well!

SFORZA.

A bird i' th' air brings news, they say—but this
Came by a serpent. How's the spear-wound now,
You took for me at Pisa? Brave Rossano!
We'll break a lance once more in company—
It warms my blood to find myself again
O' the same side. Come out in the open air!
We'll talk more freely, as we used to do,
Over a watch-fire. Come out, old comrade!

[*Exeunt Sforza and Rossano.*

SCENE III.

[*The apartment of Bianca. Fiametta embroidering, and the page thrumming his guitar.*]

PAGE.

I'd give my greyhound now—gold collar and silken leash—to know why the Duke sent for my lady.

FIAMETTA.

Would you, Master Curiosity?

PAGE.

Mistress Pert, I would—and thy acquaintance into the bargain.

FIAMETTA.

Better keep the goods you come honestly by. I would you knew as well how your mistress came by *you*.

PAGE.

I came to her from heaven—like her taste for my music. (*Hums a tune.*)

FIAMETTA.

Did you! do they make sacks in heaven?

PAGE.

There's a waiting woman's question for you! Why sacks?

FIAMETTA.

Because I think you came in one, like a present of a puppy-dog.

PAGE.

Silence, dull pin-woman! here comes my mistress!

[*Takes off his cap as Bianca enters. She walks across the stage without heeding her attendants.*]

BIANCA.

To marry Sforza!
My dream come true! my long, long cherish'd dream!
The star come out of heaven that I had worshipp'd!

The paradise I built with soaring fancy
And filled with rapture like a honey-bee
Dropp'd from the clouds at last! Am I awake?
Am I awake, dear Giulio!

PAGE.

(*Half advancing to her.*) Noble Mistress!

BIANCA.

Thank God they speak to me! It is no dream!
It was *this* hand my father took to tell me—
It was with *these* lips that I tried to speak—
It was *this* heart that beat its giddy prison
As if th' exulting joy new-sprung within it
Would out and fill the world! . . . . .
. . . . . Wed him to-morrow!
So suddenly a wife! Will it seem modest,
With but twelve hours of giddy preparation
To come a bride to church? Will he remember
I was ten years ago affianced to him?
I have had time to think on't! Oh, I'll tell him—
When I dare speak I'll tell him—how I've lov'd him!
And day and night dream'd of him, and thro' all
The changing wars treasured the solemn troth
Broke by my father! If he listens kindly,
I'll tell him how I fed my eyes upon him
In Venice at his triumph—when he walk'd
Like a descended god beside the Doge,
Who thanked him for his victories, and the people,

From every roof and balcony, by thousands
Shouted out "Sforza! Live the gallant Sforza!"
I was a child then—but I felt my heart
Grow, in one hour, to woman!

PAGE.

Would it please you
To hear my new song, Lady?

BIANCA.

No, good Giulio!
My spirits are too troubled now for music.
Get thee to bed! Yet stay! hast heard the news?

PAGE.

Is't from the camp?

BIANCA.

Ay—Sforza's taken prisoner!

PAGE.

I'm vex'd for that!

BIANCA.

Why vex'd?

PAGE.

In four years more
I shall bear sword and lance. There'll be no Sforza
To kill when I'm a man! Who took him, Lady?

BIANCA.

A blind boy, scarcely bigger than yourself;

And gave him, bound, to me! In brief, dear Giulio!
Not to perplex those winking eye-lids more,
The wars are done, and Sforza weds to morrow
Your happy mistress!

PAGE.

Sforza! We shall have
A bonfire then!

BIANCA.

Ay—twenty!

PAGE.

And you'll live
Here in the palace, and have masks and gambols
The year round, will you not?

BIANCA.

My pretty minion,
You know not yet what love is! Love's a miser,
That plucks his treasure from the prying world
And grudges e'en the eye of daylight on it!
Another's look is theft—another's touch
Robs it of all its value. Love conceives
No paradise but such as Eden was
With *two* hearts beating in it.

[*Leaves the Page and walks thoughtfully away.*]

Oh, I'll build
A home upon some green and flow'ry isle
In the lone lakes, where we will use our empire

Only to keep away the gazing world.
The purple mountains and the glassy waters
Shall make a hush'd pavillion with the sky,
And we two in the midst will live alone,
Counting the hours by stars and waking birds,
And jealous but of sleep! To bed, dear Giulio!
And wake betimes.

PAGE.

Good night, my dearest Lady!

BIANCA.

To bed, Fiametta! I have busy thoughts,
That needs will keep me waking.

FIAMETTA.

Good night, Lady.

BIANCA.

Good night, good night! The moon has fellowship
For moods like mine! I'll forth upon the terrace,
And watch her while my heart beats warm and fast.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE I.

[*The square of Milan. The front of the Cathedral on the right. People kneeling round the steps, and the organ heard within. Enter Pasquali and Fiametta in haste.*]

FIAMETTA.

Now, Master Pasquali! said I not we should be too late?

PASQUALI.

Truly, there seems no room!

FIAMETTA.

And I her first serving-woman! If it were my own wedding I should not grieve more to have miss'd it. You would keep scribbling, scribbling, and I knew it was past twelve.

PASQUALI.

Consider, Mistress Fiametta! I had no news of this marriage till the chimes began; and the epithalamium must be writ! I were shamed else, being the bard of Milan.

FIAMETTA.

The what of Milan?

PASQUALI.

The bard, I say! Come aside, and thou shalt be consoled. I'll read thee my epithalamium.

FIAMETTA.

Is it something to ask money of the bridegroom?

PASQUALI.

Dost thou think I would beg?

FIAMETTA.

Nay—thou'rt very poor!

PASQUALI.

Look thee, Mistress Fiametta! that's a vulgar error thou hadst best be rid of. I, whom thou callest poor, am richer than the Duke.

FIAMETTA.

Now, if thou'rt not out of thy ten senses, the Virgin bless us.

PASQUALI.

I'll prove it even to thy dull apprehension. Answer me truly. How many meals eats the Duke in a day?

FIAMETTA.

Three, I think, if he be well.

PASQUALI.

So does Pasquali! How much covering has he?

FIAMETTA.

Nay—what keeps him warm.

PASQUALI.

So has Pasquali! How much money carries he on his person?

FIAMETTA.

None, I think. He is a Duke, and needs none.

PASQUALI.

Even so Pasquali! He is a Poet, and needs none. What good does him the gold in his treasury?

FIAMETTA.

He thinks of it.

PASQUALI.

So can Pasquali! What pleasure hath he in his soldiers?

FIAMETTA.

They keep him safe in his palace.

PASQUALI.

So they do Pasquali in his chamber. Thus far, thou'lt allow, my state is as good as his—and better—for I can think of his gold, and sleep safe by his soldiers, yet have no care of them.

FIAMETTA.

I warrant he has troubled thoughts.

PASQUALI.

Thou sayst well. Answer me once more, and I'll prove to thee in what I am richer. Thou'st ne'er heard, I dare swear, of imagination?

FIAMETTA.

Is't a Pagan nation or a Christian?

PASQUALI.

Stay—I'll convey it to thee by a figure. What were the value of thy red stockings over black, if it were always night?

FIAMETTA.

None.

PASQUALI.

What were beauty, if it were always dark?

FIAMETTA.

The same as none.

PASQUALI.

What were green leaves better than brown—diamonds better than pebbles—gold better than brass—if it were always dark?

FIAMETTA.

No better, truly.

PASQUALI.

Then the shining of the sun, in a manner, dyes your stockings, creates beauty, makes gold and diamonds, and paints the leaves green?

FIAMETTA.

I think it doth.

PASQUALI.

Now mark! There be gems in the earth, qualities in the flowers, creatures in the air, the Duke ne'er dreams of. There be treasuries of gold and silver, temples and palaces of glorious work, rapturous music, and feasts the gods sit at—and all seen only by a sun, which, to the Duke, is black as Erebus.

FIAMETTA.

Lord! Lord! Where is it, Master Pasquali?

PASQUALI.

In my head! (*Fiametta discovers signs of fear.*) All these gems, treasuries, palaces, and fairy harmonies I see by the imagination I spoke of. Am I not richer now?

FIAMETTA, (*retreating from him.*)

The Virgin help us! He thinks there's a sun in his head! I thought to have married him, but he's mad!

[*She falls to weeping.*

[*The cathedral is flung open, and the organ plays louder. The bridal procession comes out of church and passes across the stage. As they pass Pasquali, he offers his epithalamium to Sforza.*]

SFORZA.

What have we here—petitions?

BIANCA.

Nay, my Lord!
Pasquali's not a beggar. You shall read
Something inventive here! He's a clear fancy,
And sings your praises well. Good chamberlain!
Bring him with honour to the palace! Please you,
My Lord, wilt on?

PAGE, (*to Pasquali.*)

You'll come to the feast now, wont you?
We'll sit together, and have songs and stories,
And keep the merriest end on't!

[*As the procession passes off, Sarpellione plucks Pasquali by the sleeve and retains him.*]

SARPELLIONE.

A fair bride, Sir!

PASQUALI.

What would you, noble Count?

SARPELLIONE.

The bridegroom, now,

Should be a poet, like yourself, to know
The worth of such a jewel!

PASQUALI.

Haply so—
But we are staying from the marriage feast—

SARPELLIONE.

One word! (*Pulls him aside.*) Have you ambition?

PASQUALI.

Like the wings
Upon a marble cherub—always spread,
But fastened to a body of such weight,
'Twill never rise till doomsday. I would drink
Sooner than talk of it!—Come on, my Lord!

SARPELLIONE.

Signor Pasquali—I have mark'd you oft
For a shrewd, rapid wit. As one who looks
Oft on the sun—there needs no tedious care
Lest the light break too suddenly upon you.
Is it not so?

PASQUALI.

Say on!

SARPELLIONE.

You know how Naples
Has over it a sky all poetry.

PASQUALI.

I know it well.

SARPELLIONE.

The radiant Giovanna
Cherish'd Bocaccio and Petrarch there,
And 'tis the quality of the air they breath'd—
Alphonso feels it!—Brief and to the point!
My royal master sends for you. He'd have
A galaxy around him!

PASQUALI.

Noble Count!

[*Enter Page.*]

PAGE.

I'm sent to bid you to the feast, sirs!

SARPELLIONE.

Go!
We'll follow straight. [*Exit Page.*
This leaden-headed soldier
Slights you, I see—He took you for a beggar!

PASQUALI.

Humph! 'tis his wedding day, and I forgive him!

SARPELLIONE.

You're used to wrong, I know.

PASQUALI.

To-day, my Lord,
I'm bent upon a feast —wake not a devil
To mar my appetite!

SARPELLIONE.

One single word!
This brainless spear-head would be Duke of Milan.

PASQUALI.

What! while the Duke lives?

SARPELLIONE.

While the Duke's *son* lives,
For there *is* one—I'll prove it when you will—
And he will murder him to take his crown.

PASQUALI.

How know you that?

SARPELLIONE.

Alphonso, king of Naples,
Would have this usurpation and this murder
In time prevented.

PASQUALI.

How?

SARPELLIONE.

By Sforza's death.
There's no way else—but 'tis a dangerous theme
To talk on here—come out of the way a little,
And you shall have such reasons for the deed—

PASQUALI, (*flings him from him with contempt.*)

What "deed!" Dost take me for a murderer?

My Lord! I'm poor. I have a thirst for honors
Such as you offered me but now, that burns
Like fire upon my lips—I could be tortur'd
Thro' twenty deaths to leave a name behind me.
But nay, I prate—I'll turn not out to *thee*
The golden inside of a soul of honor—
(*Leaving him.*) When next you want a hand for a bad deed,
Look to your *equals*—there are those *beneath* you
Who, from their darkling wells, see guiding stars
Far o'er *your* head, my Lord! [*Exit.*

SARPELLIONE.

Such men as this
Do not betray e'en villains! I shall find
Another and a fitter. To the feast now!
And watch my time and means. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

[*An ante-room, with a feast seen beyond. Enter Sforza and Rossano.*]

ROSSANO.

I've a new culverin
Invented here by the Duke's armorer;
Will you walk forth?

SFORZA.

Most willingly. Within there!
My helmet!

[*Enter Bianca.*]

BIANCA.

Is there fresh alarm, my Lord?
You would not go abroad?

[*She takes the helmet from the page as he brings it in.*]

SFORZA.

A little way, sweet,
To look at some new arms.

BIANCA.

To-morrow, surely,
Will do as well. Here are some loving verses
Writ on your marriage!

ROSSANO.

I've the gonfalon
Your father gave me at the siege of Parma.
The rags wave yet!

SFORZA.

I'd rather see a thread on't
Than feast a hundred years!

BIANCA.

My Lord, wil't please you

Come in, and hear the verses? There's a wine
You did not taste, grown on Vesuvius;
Pray you come in!

ROSSANO.

I've, in my tent, the sword
Your father pluck'd from a retreating soldier
To head the fight at Pisa. 'Tis well hack'd!

SFORZA.

I'll come, Rossano!
(To Bianca.) Nay, sweet! by your leave
(*Takes his helmet.*)
We'll go abroad a little! You shall see us
Betimes at supper. Keep the revels toward!
We'll taste your wine anon. Come, brave Rossano!
[*They go out. Bianca looks after them thoughtfully a few moments, and then walks back slowly to the banquetting room.*]

SCENE III.

[*The Ramparts at night. Enter Sforza and Rossano.*]

ROSSANO.

She's loving in her nature, and methought
Seem'd griev'd when you came forth!

SFORZA.

I should have thought so,
But that I had some private information
She lov'd another!

ROSSANO.

You're perhaps abused!

SFORZA.

Nay—nay—how should she love me? I'm well on
To my meridian, see you!—a rough soldier—
Who never learn'd the courtly phrase of love.
And she—the simplest maiden in a cot,
Is not more tender-eyed, nor has a heart
Apter to know love's lesson ere 'tis time.
She's loved ere now, Rossano!

ROSSANO.

Haply so—
Yet be not rude too rashly.

SFORZA.

Rude! I'll make
This forced link that policy puts on her
Loose as a smoke-curl! She shall know no master,
And be no slave for me!

ROSSANO.

You'll not neglect her!

SFORZA.

The sun of woman's world is love, Rossano!

When that sun sets, if no unpitying cloud
Trouble her sky, there rises oftentimes
A crescent moon of memory, whose light
Makes the dark pathway clear again. Bianca's
May have gone down for me! I'll be no cloud
To mar the moon as well.

ROSSANO.

Stand by—there comes
A footfall this way. (*They stand aside.*)

[*Enter Pasquali, hiccupping, and talking to himself.*]

PASQUALI.

That wine was grown on Vesuvius. That's the reason it makes such an eruption. If it breaks out o' the top o' my head now—as I think it will—for it gets hotter and hotter—I shall know if wit be in the brains or the belly.

ROSSANO, (*aside.*)

Stay—my Lord! This is Pasquali, whose verses Bianca sometimes sings to her lute. Ten to one now but you may gather from his drunkenness if Bianca loves another. (*Rossano comes forward.*) Good even, Master Pasquali!

PASQUALI.

That's an every day phrase—this is holiday!

ROSSANO.

A *merry* good even then!

PASQUALI.

Ay—that's better! For we're all merry—except the bride. And that's the way of it.

ROSSANO.

What's the way of it?

PASQUALI.

See here! Who is it that never weeps at a funeral?

ROSSANO.

You shall tell me.

PASQUALI.

The dead man, that hath most cause.

ROSSANO.

And what hath that to do with a bridal?

PASQUALI.

A great deal. Of all people at a bridal, who should be most merry? Why, the bride! Now I have just left a bride that is sad enough for a funeral.

ROSSANO.

For what cause, think you?

PASQUALI.

There are some things which can have but one cause. There's but one cause for drunkenness, and there's but one for grief on a wedding-day.

ROSSANO.

And what's that?

PASQUALI.

Wine—causes drunkenness!

ROSSANO.

And what causes grief in a bride?

PASQUALI.

Want of love for the bridegroom.

ROSSANO.

How know you that, sir?

PASQUALI.

Listen to in-spi-ra-tion!

"When first young Lionel did catch mine eye,
"Sforza, the valiant, pass'd unheeded by!"

ROSSANO.

Villain! these are thine own lying verses!

PASQUALI, (*pulling out his sword.*)

The figures of speech are lies of verse. But if thou sayest it is a lie that Bianca loves Lionel best, *thou* liest in prose, and so, come on! (*Attacks Rossano, and Sforza comes forward, and strikes up their swords.*)

SFORZA.

Get home, thou drunkard! Come away, Rossano.
He writes what's palatable, and but echoes

That which is rung at court. She loved this Prince—
Sarpellione told me so before.
We'll to the field and our old mistress, glory.
Come on—we'll talk of battles and forget her.

[*Exeunt.*

PASQUALI.

Fighting's not my vocation; but I have an itching that way, and I'll after him. Halloo! Were there two men? I think there were two. The last man called me a drunkard! That's no offence! a poet may be a drunkard! But "villain!"—That's incompatible, and must be prick'd back. Halloo! [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

[*Bianca's chamber at midnight. She sits on a couch in a white undress, and Sforza beside her in his armor.*]

BIANCA.

Dost think this ring a pretty one, my Lord!

SFORZA.

Ay, 'tis a pretty ring! I have one here
Marancio gave me—Giacomo Marancio.
The ring his wife sent—but you've heard the story?

BIANCA.

I think I never heard it.

SFORZA.

She's a woman
The heart grows but to speak of. She was held
A hostage by the Milanese, (I pray you
Pardon the mention,) when twixt them and me
Marancio held a pass. Her life was threatened
If by his means I crossed the Adige. She—
(Brave heart! I warm to speak of her!) found means
To send to him this ring; wherein is writ
"He who loves most, loves honor best." You'll see it
Here o' th' inside.

BIANCA.

Did you see this lady?

SFORZA.

I hazarded a battle three days after
With perilous odds, only to bring her off—
And would have sold my life for't.

BIANCA.

Did you *see* her?

SFORZA.

I gave her to Marancio when I took
The ring of him.

BIANCA.

My Lord! speak you so warmly
Of any other woman?

SFORZA, (*rising and taking his helmet.*)

Nay, I know not.
There are some qualities that women have
Which are less worthy, but which warm us more
Than speaking of their virtues. I remember
The fair Giovanna in her pride at Naples.
Gods! what a light enveloped her! She left
Little to shine in history—but her beauty
Was of that order that the universe
Seem'd govern'd by her motion. Men look'd on her
As if her next step would arrest the world;
And as the sea-bird seems to rule the wave
He rides so buoyantly, all things around her—
The glittering army, the spread gonfalon,
The pomp, the music, the bright sun in heaven—
Seem'd glorious by her leave.

BIANCA, (*rising and going to the window.*)

There's emulation
Of such sweet praise, my Lord! Did you not hear
The faint note of a nightingale?

SFORZA.

More like
A far heard clarion, methought! They change
The sentinels perchance. 'Tis time Rossano
Awaits me on the ramparts,

BIANCA.

Not to-night.

Go not abroad to-night, my Lord!

SFORZA.

For a brief hour, sweet! The old soldier loves
To gossip of the fields he's lost and won,
And I, no less, to listen. Get to bed!
I'll follow you anon.

[*Exit Sforza.*

BIANCA.

He does not love me!
I never dream'd of this! To be his bride
Was all the Heav'n I look'd for! Not to love me
When I have been ten years affianced to him!—
When I have liv'd for him—shut up my heart,
With every pulse and hope, for his use only—
Worshipp'd—oh God! idolatrously lov'd him!

. . . . . .

Why has he sought to marry me? Why still
Renew the broken pledge my father made him?
Why, for ten years, with war and policy,
Strive for my poor alliance?
. . . . . He *must* love me,
Or I shall break my heart! I never had
One other hope in life! I never link'd
One thought, but to this chain! I have no blood—
No breath—no being—separate from Sforza!
Nothing has any other name! The sun
Shined like his smile the lightning was his glory—

The night his sleep, and the hush'd moon watch'd o'er
him;—
Stars writ his name—his breath hung on the flowers—
Music had no voice but to say *I love him*,
And life no future, but his love for me!
Whom does he love? Marancio's wife? He prais'd
Only her courage! Queen Giovanna's beauty?
'Tis dust these many years! There is no sign
He loves another; and report said ever
His *Glory* was his mistress. *Can* he love?
Shame on the doubt! T'was written in the ring
"He who loves *most* loves honor best"—and Sforza
Is made too like a god to lack a heart.
And so, I breathe again! To make him love me
Is all my life now! to pry through his nature,
And find his heart out. *That's* wrapt in his glory!
I'll feed his glory then! He praised Giovanna
That she was royal and magnificent—
Ay—that's well thought on, too! How should an eye,
Dazzled with war and warlike pomp like Sforza's,
Find pleasure in simplicity like mine!

(*Looks at her dress.*)

I'm a Duke's daughter, and I'll wear the look on't!
Unlock my jewels and my costly robes,
And while I keep his show-struck eye upon me,
Watch for a golden opportunity
To build up his renown!

. . . . . And so farewell
The gentle world I've liv'd in! Farewell all
My visions of a world for two hearts only—
Sforza's and mine! If I outlive this change,
So brief and yet so violent within me,
I'll come back in my dreams, oh childish world!
If not—a broken heart blots out remembrance.

[*Exit into her bridal chamber, which is seen beyond on opening the door.*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I.

[*An ante-chamber of the palace. Brunorio leaning sullenly on his sword by the door. Enter Sarpellione.*]

SARPELLIONE.

What's this?—the brave Brunorio turned lackey?

BRUNORIO.

Nay, Count! I wait my turn.

SARPELLIONE.

If a civilian
May have a judgment of a soldier's duty,
You're out of place, sir! This is not the camp!
You're not on guard here! There's a difference
Twixt patience at your post, and kicking heels
In my Lord's antechamber!

BRUNORIO.

By the saints
My own thought, noble Count! As you came in
I brooded on't.

SARPELLIONE, (*aside.*)

(This blockhead may be turn'd
To a shrewd use now! I have mark'd his brows
Blackening upon Rossano, who usurps
His confidence with Sforza. Could I seize
The lightning in this jealous thunder-cloud—
I'll see the depth on't.) Sforza *knows* you're *here?*

BRUNORIO.

I had a message by a varlet page,
Who bid me wait here.

SARPELLIONE.

By a page? Sacristie!
Fair treatment for a soldier! Say, Brunorio!
What was't I heard of the Pope's standard-bearer
Clove to the wrist?

BRUNORIO.

Heard you of *that,* my Lord?
You see the weapon, here!

SARPELLIONE.

Was't thine, i' faith?
I thought *promotion* had been won with service!
Was't thou, indeed? I heard the King Alfonso
Say 'twas the best blow and the bravest follow'd
He'd known in his time. How it came to his ears
I know not—but he made the court ring with it!

BRUNORIO.

The King?

SARPELLIONE.

How long since wast thou made lieutenant?

BRUNORIO.

Five years come March.

SARPELLIONE.

Jove! how this peasant's son
Treads merit in the dust! Sforza keeps back
His betters, brave Brunorio!

(*Rossano passes out.*)

Ay—there!
That man cuts off your sunshine, or I know
Nothing of courts. I, that have no part in it,
Have mark'd how you are slighted for Rossano.
Forgive my touching on't—'Tis my respect
For a brave soldier makes me speak so freely.
But were I of your counsel—

BRUNORIO.

Noble Count,
My heart speaks thro' your lips. Since this Rossano
Has had my Lord's ear, I've been thrust aside
Like a disgrac'd hound.

SARPELLIONE.

Frankly, brave Brunorio!

And between us,—I've heard you lightly mentioned
By this ungrateful Sforza!

BRUNORIO.

How, my Lord?

SARPELLIONE.

I would not tell you but to serve you in it—
He told Rossano, there, that you had strength,
And struck a sharp blow—and so did an axe!
But for your brains—and then he tossed his head—
You've seen the scorn upon his lip?

BRUNORIO.

Curse on him!
I've a sharp blow left yet—and brains enough
To find a time to strike it! Did you say
Alfonso had spoke well of me, my Lord?

SARPELLIONE.

So well, that, on my own authority—
If you'd take service with a better master—
You're Captain from this hour.

BRUNORIO.

My Lord! So promptly
I take your offer, that your commendations
Will find no swifter bearer than myself
To King Alfonso.

SARPELLIONE.

Stay—I'm not just now
On the best terms with Sforza, and you'll see

With half a glance, that while he's here in Milan
His best sword could not leave him for Alfonso,
But it would throw suspicion upon me,
And touch my credit here. I'll write your warrant,
Which you shall keep, and use it when you please.
But for the present shut your bosom up,
And bear your wrongs. Sforza awaits you now—
Go in. I'll see you as you pass again.

[*Exit Brunorio.*

He's a fit tool! This o'er-ambitious Sforza
Must not be Duke—and if I fret this cur
Till he will tear his master, why, 'twill save
A worthier hand the trouble on't.

[*Exit Sarpellione.*

SCENE II.

[*Sforza discovered sitting thoughtfully in his apartment. The Page curiously examining his sword.*]

SFORZA, (*yawning.*)

This is dull work!

PAGE.

My Lord, wilt please you teach me
A trick of fence?

SFORZA.

Ay—willingly! Hast thou
A weapon in that needle-case of thine?

PAGE, (*drawing.*)

A weapon! If I had your legs to stand on
I'd give you all the odds 'twixt it and yours!
Look at that blade! (*Bends it.*) Damascus!

[*Sforza smiles, and unbuckles his scabbard.*]

By the gods
You shall not laugh at me! I'll give you odds,—
With any thing to stand on!

SFORZA.

Nay—I'll sit—
And you shall touch me if you can! Come on!
And see I do not rap you o'er the cockscomb!

PAGE.

Have at you fairly! Mind! for I'm in earnest!

(*They fence.*)

SFORZA.

One—two—well thrust, by Jupiter! Again!
One—two!

PAGE, (*makes a lunge.*)

Three! there you have it!

SFORZA, (*starting up.*)

Come—
This is no play!

PAGE.

What! does the needle prick?

(*Wipes it with his handkerchief.*)

SFORZA.

'Tis a Damascus if thou wilt! I'll laugh
No more at it or thee. Come here, thou varlet!
Where got thy mistress such a ready hand
As thou art?

PAGE, (*fencing with the chair.*)

From an eagle's nest, my Lord!

SFORZA.

I'll swear to it! Thou hast the eagle's eye!
But tell me—what brave gentleman of Milan
Has thy blood in his veins?

PAGE.

I'm not of Milan.
Sarpellione brought me here from Naples.

SFORZA.

Thou'rt not his child, I'll answer for't.

PAGE.

Not I!
I hate him! Come! Wilt try another pass?

SFORZA.

Stay! is the Count thy master then?

PAGE.

My master?
He's an old snake! But I'll say this for him,
Were I a royal prince—(as I may be—
Who knows!)—Sarpellione could not treat me
With more becoming honor.

SFORZA, (*starting up suddenly.*)

What if this
Should be the Duke's son that he told me of?
Come hither, sir! What know you of your father?
(*Aside.*) ('Tis the Visconti's lip!)

PAGE.

I'll tell you all
I know, my Lord. Alfonso sent me here,
Five years ago, in quality of a page.
I was to serve my Lady and no other,
And to be gently nurtured. The king gave me
A smart new feather—bade me bear myself
Like a young Prince at Milan—

SFORZA, (*starting away from him.*)

It is he!—
Princely in spirit, and Visconti's impress
On every feature! He'll be Duke of Milan!

PAGE.

Heard you the Duke was worse to-day, my Lord?

SFORZA.

What Duke?

PAGE.

Nay, sir! you ought to know what Duke!
I heard the doctor say you'd wear his crown
In three days. Never say I told you of it.
He whisper'd it to old Sarpellione,
Who—

SFORZA.

What?

PAGE.

Look'd daggers at him!

SFORZA, (*aside.*)

(Now the devil
Plucks at my soul indeed! If the Duke die,
The crown lies in the gift of my new wife,
And I were Duke as sure as he were dead—
But for this boy!

(*Walks rapidly up and down.*)

I'd set my foot in Venice
In half a year!—Ferrara – then Bologna—
Florence –and thence to Naples! I'd be King
Of Italy before their mourning's threadbare—
But for this boy! . . . . . .

(*The Page still fences with the chair.*)

. . . . . I'd found a dynasty!—

Be second of the name—but the first king—
And there should go, e'en with the news, to France,
A bold ambassador from one Francesco,—
Sforza by birth and King of Italy—
But for this boy! . . . . . .
. . . . . I would he were a man!
I would an army barr'd me from the crown,
Sooner than this boy's right! But he might die!
He might have run upon my sword just now!
'Twere natural,—and so it were to fall
In playing with't, and bleed to death unheard,
From a ripp'd vein. That would be natural!
He might have died in *many ways,* and *I*
Have had no part in't.)

PAGE.

Will you fence, my Lord?

SFORZA, (*clutches his sword, and suddenly sheaths it, and walks from him. Aside.*)
(Get thee gone, devil! After all his glory
Shall Sforza be the murderer of a child!)
No—No! I'll not fence with thee! Go and play!
I—I—I—(*turns from him.*)
(*Aside.*) (Stay! shall such a grain of sand
As a boy's life, check Sforza's bold ambition!
I, who have hewn down thousands in a day
For but the play on't—I, upon whose hand
Sat slaughter, like a falcon, to let loose

At all that flew above me! I—whose conscience
Carries the reckoning of unnumber'd souls
Sped unto Hell or Heaven, for this ambition!—
Shall I mar all now with a woman's pity
For a fair stripling!)

(*Draws his sword, and the Page, who has been regarding him attentively, comes up, and pulls him by the sleeve.*)

PAGE.

Look you here, my Lord!
If I have harm'd you—for you seem so angry
I *think* I have—more than I meant to do—
Take my own sword, and wound me back again!
I'll not cry out—and when you see me bleed,
You'll pardon me that I was so unhappy
As to have chanc'd to wound you!

(*Kneels, opens his bosom, and offers his sword-hilt to Sforza.*)

SFORZA.

Angels keep me!
Give me thy hand, boy!

(*Looks at him a moment, and passes his hand across his eyes.*)

PAGE.

You'll forgive me, sir?
Letting of blood—*when done in fair play, mind you!*
Has no offence in't.

SFORZA.

Leave me now, sweet boy!
I'll see thee at the feast to-night! Farewell!
(*Page kisses his hand, and exit.*)
Shade of my father! If from Heaven thou look'st
Upon the bright inheritance of glory
I took from thee—pluck from my tortur'd soul
These thoughts of Hell—and keep me worthy of thee!
(*Walks up and down thoughtfully, and then presses the crucifix to his lips.*)
As I am true to honor and that child,
Help me, just Heaven! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

[*A bridal feast seen through a glass door in the rear of the stage. Enter, from the banquetting-room, Bianca, drest with great magnificence, followed by Sforza, Rossano, Brunorio, and Sarpellione. A raised throne at the side. Music heard till the door is closed.*]

BIANCA.

They who love stillness follow us! The brain
Grows giddy with the never-wearying dance,
And music's pause is sweet as its beginning.

Shut the doors, Giulio! Sarpellione! enter!
You're welcome to Trophonius' cave! We'll hold
The Court of Silence, and I'll play the Queen.
My brave Lord, you shall doff that serious air,
And be court favorite—sit you at our feet!

SFORZA.

Too envious a place and office both!
I'll sit here with Rossano. Honor's flower—
That lifts a bold head in the world—at court
Looks for the lily's hiding-place.

SARPELLIONE, (*aside.*)

(What trick
Lies in this new humility.) The lily
Is lowly born, and knows its place, my Lord!

BIANCA.

Yet is it sought with pains while the rose withers!

SARPELLIONE.

The rose lifts to the sun its flowering tree,
And all its parts are honor'd—while the lily
Upon one fragrant stem rears all its beauty—
And its coarse family of leaves are left
To lie on th' earth they cling to.

SFORZA, (*to Rossano, with whom he has been conversing apart.*)

(I've sure news
He was worse yesterday!)

(*Bianca rising with dignity, and descending from the ducal chair.*)

BIANCA.

Now, since the serpent
Misled our mother, never was fair truth
So subtly turned to error. If the rose
Were born a lily, and, by force of heart
And eagerness for light, grew tall and fair,
'Twere a true type of the first fiery soul
That makes a low name honorable. They
Who take it by inheritance alone—
Adding no brightness to it—are like stars
Seen in the ocean, that were never there
But for the bright originals in Heaven!

SARPELLIONE, (*sneeringly.*)

Rest to the gallant soul of the *first* Sforza!

BIANCA.

Amen! but triple glory to the second!
I have a brief tale for thine ear, Ambassador!

SARPELLIONE.

I listen, Lady!

BIANCA.

Mark the moral, sir!
An eagle once from the Euganean hills
Soared bravely to the sky. (*To Sf.*) (Wilt please my Lord

List to my story? In his giddy track
Scarce mark'd by them who gazed upon the first,
Follow'd a new-fledged eaglet, fast and well.
Upward they sped, and all eyes on their flight
Gazed with admiring awe, when, suddenly,
The parent bird, struck by a thunderbolt,
Dropp'd lifeless thro' the air. The eaglet paused,
And hung upon his wings; and as his sire
Plashed in the far-down wave, men look'd to see him
Flee to his nest affrighted!

SFORZA, (*with great interest.*)
Did he so?

BIANCA.

My noble Lord—he had a monarch's heart!
He wheel'd a moment in mid air, and shook
Proudly his royal wings, and then right on,
With crest uplifted and unwavering flight,
Sped to the sun's eye, straight and gloriously.

PAGE.

Lady—is that true?

BIANCA.

Ay—men call those eagles
Sforza the First and Second!

(*The bell tolls, and enter a Messenger.*)

MESSENGER.

Pardon, Madam,

For my sad news! your royal father's dead!

BIANCA, (*aside, with great energy*).

(Sforza'll be Duke!)

(*Turning to the messenger.*)

Died he in much pain, know you?

MESSENGER.

Madam—

BIANCA, (*aside.*)

(The crown is mine! He will remember
The crown was *mine.*)

(*Turns to the messenger.*)

Sent he for any one
In his extremity?

MESSENGER.

Most honour'd Madam—

BIANCA, (*aside.*)

(Ingratitude is not the lion's fault—
He cannot hate me when I make him royal!
It would be monstrous if he did not love me!)

(*To the messenger.*)

Said you my father sent for me?

MESSENGER.

No, Madam!
He died as he had lived, unseen of any
Save his physician!

BIANCA, (*aside.*)

(Sforza must be crowned
And then our mourning will shut out the world!
He'll be alone with me and his new glory—
All royal, and all *mine!*) (*To Sf.*) Please you, my Lord,
Dismiss the revellers! My father's dead!
(*Aside.*) (There are no more Viscontis—Sforza's children
Shall now be Dukes of Milan! Think on that!
He'll think on't, and his heart will come down to me,
Or there's no truth in nature!) (*To Sf.*) My brave Lord!
Shall we go in?

SFORZA.

Go you in first! (*hands her in*) Rossano
Will forth with me, to see the funeral
Fitly arrang'd.

BIANCA.

You 'll come back soon, my Lord?

SFORZA.

Ay—presently! [*Exit Bianca.*

ROSSANO.

With what a majesty
She walks!

SFORZA.

She knows not that she has a brother,
And in her port already mocks the duchess.

ROSSANO.

She would have made a glorious queen, my Lord!

SFORZA.

She *should* have made one—but I cannot talk on't!
Lets forth upon our errand, and forget
There was a crown in Milan. [*Exeunt.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE I.

[*Pasquali's Chamber. Fiametta sitting with his cap in her hand.*]

FIAMETTA.

What wilt thou do for a black feather, Pasquali?

PASQUALI.

Hast thou no money?

FIAMETTA.

No—save my dowry of six pieces.

PASQUALI.

Give the pieces to me, and thy dowry will be ten times greater.

FIAMETTA.

An it be not six times less, I will never trust counting upon fingers.

PASQUALI.

Hast thou no dread of dying uncelebrated?

FIAMETTA.

If it be sin I have a dread of it by baptism.

PASQUALI.

Is it a sin to neglect thy immortality?

FIAMETTA.

Ay—it is.

PASQUALI.

Then take heed how thou fallest into sin—for to be the friend of a poet is to be immortal, and thou art no friend of mine if I have not thy six pieces.

FIAMETTA.

But how shall I have six times more, master Pasquali?

PASQUALI.

In reputation! Wouldst thou marry a fool?

FIAMETTA.

No, truly.

PASQUALI.

Then if thy husband be wise, he will be more proud that thou art famous, than covetous of thy six pieces.

FIAMETTA.

And shall I be famous? (*Gives him the money.*)

PASQUALI.

Thou wilt live when Sforza is dead!

FIAMETTA.

Is not Sforza famous, then?

PASQUALI.

He hath fame while he lives, and so had king Priam of Troy. But if Homer had not written, Priam would have been forgot and Troy too; and if Sforza live not in poetry, he is as dead in a century—as thou and Laura were, but for your favors to Petrarch and Pasquali.

FIAMETTA.

Why does not Sforza give thee six pieces and be immortal?

PASQUALI.

Truly—he pays more for a less matter! It is the blindness of great men that they slight the poets. Look here now — hath not Sforza shed blood, and wasted treasure, and taken a thousand murders on his soul, to leave a name after him?

FIAMETTA.

I misdoubt he hath.

PASQUALI.

Now will I, whom he thinks less worthy than a trumpeter, sit down, and with a scrape of my pen, make a dog's name more known to posterity.

FIAMETTA.

When thou speakest of a dog, I think of my Lady's

page. Canst thou tell me why she should love him so out of reason?

PASQUALI.

Canst thou tell me why the moon riseth not every night, as the sun every day?

FIAMETTA.

No—truly.

PASQUALI.

Neither can I give thee reason for a woman's fancy—which is as unaccountable in its caprice as the moon in its changes. Hence the sun is called "*he*," the moon "*she*."

FIAMETTA.

Holy Virgin—what it is to be learned!

PASQUALI.

Come, Fiametta! spend thy dowry while thy mind is enlightened!

FIAMETTA.

If I should repent now!

PASQUALI.

Think not of it. If thou shouldst repent to-morrow, I shall still go beseemingly to the funeral, and thou wilt be famous past praying for. Come away!

SCENE II.

[*The Garden of the palace of Milan. Enter Bianca, in mourning, followed by Sarpellione.*]

BIANCA.

Liar—'tis not true!

SARPELLIONE.

Will't please you read this letter from the King,
Writ when he sent him to you—

BIANCA, (*plucks it from him, and tears it to pieces.*)

'Tis a lie
Writ by thyself—

SARPELLIONE, (*taking up the pieces.*)

The King has written here
The story of his birth, and that he is
Your brother, pledges his most royal honour—

BIANCA.

Lie upon lie—

SARPELLIONE.

And will maintain the same
With sword and battle!

BIANCA.

Let him! There's a Sforza

Will whip him back to Naples! Tell him so!
There'll be a Duke upon the throne of Milan
In three days more whose children will be Kings!

SARPELLIONE.

Your brother, Madam?

BIANCA.

Liar, no!—my husband!
The Crown is mine, and *I* will give it him!

SARPELLIONE.

Pardon me, Lady, 'tis not yours to give!
While a Visconti lives—and one *does* live—
Princely and like his father—'tis not yours—
And Sforza dare not take it.

BIANCA.

He *has* taken it,
In taking me. Sforza is Duke, I say!

SARPELLIONE.

Am I dismiss'd to Naples with this news?

BIANCA.

Ay—on the instant!

SARPELLIONE.

Will you give me leave
To bid the Prince make ready for his journey?

BIANCA.

What Prince?

SARPELLIONE.

Your brother, Madam; who'll come back
With the whole league of armed Italy
To take the crown he's born to.

BIANCA.

I've a page
I love, called Giulio! If you mean to ask me
If he goes with you—lying traitor! no!
I love him, and will keep him!

SARPELLIONE.

Ay—till Milan
Knows him for Prince, and then farewell to Sforza!
He's flown too near the sun!

BIANCA.

Foul raven, silence!
What dost *thou* know of eagles, who wert born
To mumble over carrion! Hast thou look'd
On the high front of Sforza! Hast thou heard
The thunder of his voice? Hast met his eye?
'Tis writ upon his forehead: "*born a king!*"
Read it, blind liar!

SARPELLIONE.

Upon your brother's, Lady,
The world shall read it.

BIANCA.

Wilt thou drive me mad?

They say all breathing nature has an instinct
Of that which would destroy it. I of thee
Feel that abhorrence! If a glistering serpent
Hiss'd in my path, I could not shudder more,
Nor would I kill it sooner—so begone!
I'll strike thee dead else!

SARPELLIONE.

Madam!

(*Exit Sarpellione.*)

BIANCA.

'Tis my brother!
At the first word with which he broke it to me
My heart gave nature's echo! 'Tis my brother!
I would that he were dead—and yet I love him—
Love him so well, that I could die for him—
Yet hate him that he bars the crown from Sforza.
He's betwixt me and Heaven! were *he* but dead,
Sforza and I would, like the sun and moon,
Have all the light the world has! He must die!
Milan will rise for him—his boyish spirit
Is known and loved in every quarter of it.
Naples is powerful, and Venice holds
Direct succession holy, and the lords
Of all the Marches will cry "down, usurper!"
For Sforza's glory has o'ershadowed their's.
Both cannot live, or I must live unloved—
And that were hell—or die, and Heaven without him

Were but a hell—for I've no soul to go there!
Nothing but love! no memory but that!
No hope! no sense!—Heaven were a madhouse to me!
Hark! who comes here?

[*Enter Sarpellione and Brunorio. Bianca conceals herself.*]

SARPELLIONE.

Strike but this blow, Brunorio—
And thou'rt a made man!

BRUNORIO.

Sforza sleeps not well.

SARPELLIONE.

Art thou less strong of arm than he who called thee
A brainless ass!

BRUNORIO.

'Sdeath, he did call me so!

SARPELLIONE.

And more I never told thee. Pay him for it—
And thou wilt save a Prince who'll cherish thee,
And Sforza's soul a murder—for he'll kill him
Ere one might ride to Naples.

BRUNORIO.

Think'st thou so?

SARPELLIONE.

Is it not certain? If this boy were dead

Sforza were Duke. With Milan at his back
He were the devil. Rather than see this,
Alfonso would share half his kingdom with thee.

BRUNORIO.

I'll do it!

SARPELLIONE.

Thou wilt save a Prince's life
Whom he would murder. Now collect thy senses,
And look around thee! On that rustic bank,
Close by the fountain, with his armor off,
He sleeps away the noon.

BRUNORIO.

With face uncovered?

SARPELLIONE.

Sometimes—but oftener with his mantle drawn
Quite over him! But thou must strike so well,
That, should he see thee, he will never tell on't.

BRUNORIO.

I'd rather he were covered.

SARPELLIONE.

'Tis most likely—
But mark the ground well. By this alley here,
You'll creep on unperceived. If he's awake—
You're his Lieutenant, and may have good reason
To seek him any hour! Are you resolved?

BRUNORIO.

I am!

SARPELLIONE.

Once more look round you!

BRUNORIO.

If he sleep
To-morrow he'll ne'er wake!

SARPELLIONE.

Why, that's well said—
Come now and try the horse I've chosen for you.
We'll fly like birds with welcome news to Naples!

(*Exeunt Sarpellione and Brunorio.*)

BIANCA.

Thank God that I was here! Can there be souls
So black as these—to plot so foul a murder!
Oh unretributive and silent Heavens!
Heard you these men? Thank God that I can save him!
The sun shone on them—*on these murderers*—
As it shines now on *me!*—Would it were Giulio
They thought to murder!—Ha! what ready fiend
Whisper'd me that? Giulio *instead* of Sforza!
Why that were murder—*too!*—Brunorio's murder!—
Not mine!—my hands would show no blood for it!
If Giulio were asleep beneath the mantle
To-morrow noon, and Sforza in his chamber—

What murder lies upon my soul for that?

. . . . . .

I'll come again to-night, and see the place,
And think on't in the dark!

[*Exit Bianca.*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE I.

[*Same scene in the Garden. Enter Bianca.*]

BIANCA.

No! no! come hate—come worse—indifference!
Come any thing—I will not! He is gone
To bring me flowers now, for he sees I'm sad;
Yet, with his delicate thought, asks not the reason,
But tries to steal it from me!—*could* I kill him!
His eyes grew moist this morn, for I was pale—
With thinking of his murder! Could I kill him!
Oh Sforza! I could walk on burning ploughshares,
But not kill pitying Giulio! I could starve—
Or freeze with wintry cold—or swallow fire—
Or die a death for every drop of blood
Curdling at my sad heart, but not kill Giulio!
No—no—no! no!

(*Sforza comes in dejectedly.*)

My Lord! My noble Lord!

SFORZA.

Give you good day, Bianca!

BIANCA.

Are you ill,
That you should drop your words so sorrowfully?

SFORZA.

I am not ill, nor well!

BIANCA.

Not well?

SFORZA.

The pulse
Beats on sometimes, when the heart quite runs down.
I'm very well!

BIANCA.

My Lord, you married me—
The priest said so—to share both joy and sorrow.
For the last privilege I've shed sweet tears!—
If I'm not worthy—

SFORZA.

Nay—you are! — I thank you
For many proofs of gentle disposition,
Which, to say truth, I scarcely look'd for in you—
Knowing that policy, and not your choice,
United us!

BIANCA.

My Lord!

SFORZA.

I say you're worthy,
For this, to see my heart—if you could do so—
But there's a grief in't now which brings you joy,
And so you'll pardon me!

(*Giulio comes in with a heap of flowers, which he throws down and listens.*)

BIANCA.

That cannot be!

SFORZA.

Listen to this. I had a falcon lately,
That I had train'd, till, in the sky above him,
He was the monarch of all birds that flew.
I loved him next my heart, and had no joy,
But to unloose his feet, and see the eagle
Quail at his fiery swoop! I brought him here!
Sitting one day upon my wrist, he heard
The nightingale you love, sing in the tree,
While I applauded him. With jealous heart
My falcon sprang to kill him; and with fear
For your sweet bird, I struck him to my feet;
And since that hour, he droops. His heart is broke,
And he'll ne'er soar again!

PAGE.

Why, one such bird
Were worth a thousand nightingales.

BIANCA, (*aside.*)

(Poor boy!
He utters his own doom!) (*To Sf.*) My Lord, I have
A slight request, which you will not refuse me.
Please you, to-day sleep in your chamber. I
Will give you reason for't.

SFORZA.

Be't as you will!
The noon creeps on apace, and in my dreams
I may forget this heaviness. (*Goes in.*)

BIANCA.

Be stern,
Strong heart! and think on Sforza! Giulio!

PAGE.

Madam!

BIANCA, (*aside.*)

(He's hot and weary now, and will drink freely
This opiate in his cup, and from his sound
And sudden sleep he'll wake in Paradise.)
Giulio, I say! (*She mixes an opiate.*)

PAGE.

Sweet Lady, pardon me!
I dream'd I was in Heaven, and fear'd to stir
Lest I should jar some music. Was't your voice
I heard sing, 'Giulio?'

BIANCA, (*aside.*)

(Oh, ye pitying angels,
Let him not love me most, when I would kill him.)
Drink, Giulio!

PAGE.

Is it sweet?

BIANCA.

The sweetest cup
You'll drink in this world!

PAGE.

I can make it sweeter—

BIANCA.

And how?

PAGE.

With your health in it!

BIANCA.

Drink it not!
Not my health! Drink what other health thou wilt!
Not mine—not mine!

PAGE.

Then here's the noble falcon
That Sforza told us of! Would you not kill
The nightingale that broke his spirit, Madam?

BIANCA.

Oh Giulio! Giulio! (*Weeps.*)

PAGE.

Nay—I did not think
You loved your singing bird so well, dear Lady!

BIANCA, (*aside.*)

(He'll break my heart!)

PAGE.

Say truly, if the falcon
Must pine unless the nightingale were dead,
Would you not kill it?

BIANCA.

Tho' my life went with it—
I must do so!

PAGE.

Why—so I think! And yet
If I had fed the nightingale, and lov'd him;
And he were innocent, as, after all,
He is, you know—I should not like to kill him—
Not with my own hands!

BIANCA, (*aside.*)

(Now, relentless Heavens,
Must I be struck with daggers thro' and through!
Speaks not a mocking demon with his lips?
I will not kill him!)

PAGE.

Sforza has gone in—

May I sleep there, sweet lady, in his place?

BIANCA.

No—boy! thou shalt not!

PAGE.

Then will you?

BIANCA.

Oh God!

I would I could, and have no waking after!
Come hither, Giulio! nay—nay—stop not there!
Come on a little, and I'll make thy pillow
Softer than ever mine will be again!
Tell me you love me ere you go to sleep!

PAGE.

With all my soul, dear mistress! (*Drops asleep.*)

BIANCA.

Now he sleeps!
This mantle for his pall—but stay—his shape
Looks not like Sforza under it. Fair flowers,

(*Heaps them at his feet, and spreads the mantle over all.*)

Your innocence to his! Exhale together,
Pure spirit and sweet fragrance! So—one kiss!
Giulio! my brother!—Who comes there? Wake, Giulio!
Or thou'lt be murdered! Nay—'twas but the wind!

(*Withdraws on tiptoe, and crouches behind a tree.*)

I will kneel here and pray!

(*Brunorio creeps in, followed by Sarpellione at a distance.*)

Hark!

SARPELLIONE.

See—he sleeps.

Strike well, and fear not!

BIANCA, (*springing forward as he strikes.*)

Giulio! Giulio! wake!

Ah God!

(*She drops on the body, the murderer escapes, and Sforza rushes in. As he bends over her the scene closes.*)

SCENE II.

[*A road outside the walls of Milan. Enter Sarpellione and Brunorio, flying from the city, and met by Pasquali.*]

PASQUALI.

What news, sirs?

(*As they attempt to pass him without answer, he steps before Sarpellione.*)

Stay, Count, I'd a word with you.

SARPELLIONE.

Stand off, and let me pass!

PASQUALI.

Nay, with your leave,
One single word!

SARPELLIONE.

Brunorio! hasten forward,
And loose my bridle! I'll be there o' th' instant!
(*Brunorio hastens on.*)
What would you say?

PASQUALI.

My Lord! I hear the bell
Tolling in Milan, that is never heard
But at some dread alarm.

SARPELLIONE, *(pressing to go on.)*
Is that all?

PASQUALI.

Stay!
I met a flying peasant here just now,
Who mutter'd of some *murder*, and flew on!

SARPELLIONE.

Slave! let me pass!
(*Draws, and Pasquali confronts him with his sword.*)

PASQUALI.

My Lord! you once essayed
To tempt me to a murder. Something tells me
That this hot haste has guilt upon its heels,
And you shall stay till I know more of it.
Down with your point!

SARPELLIONE.

Villain! respect my office!

PASQUALI.

No "villain," and no murderer! In Milan
They've soldiers' law, and if your skirts are bloody,
You'll get small honor for your coat, Ambassador!
Bear back, I say!

(*They fight, and Sarpellione falls, disarmed, on his knee.*)

SARPELLIONE.

In mercy, spare my life!

PASQUALI.

Up, coward! You shall go before to Milan,
And meet the news! If you are innocent,
I'll ne'er believe a secret prompting more.
If not, I've done the state a worthy service.
On, on, I say!

(*Drives Sarpellione out before him at the point of his sword.*)

SCENE III.

[*A room of state in the palace. Enter Rossano and a Priest.*]

ROSSANO.

Will she not eat?

PRIEST.

She hath not taken food
Since the boy died!

ROSSANO.

Nor slept?

PRIEST.

Nor closed an eyelid!

ROSSANO.

What does she?

PRIEST.

Still, with breathless repetition,
Goes thro' the Page's murder—makes his couch
As he lay down i' the garden—heaps again
The flowers upon him to eke out his length;
Then kisses him, and hides to see him kill'd!
'Twould break your heart to look on't.

ROSSANO.

Is't the law
That she must crown him?

PRIEST.

If, upon the death
Of any Duke of Milan, the succession
Fall to a daughter, she may rule alone,
Giving her husband neither voice nor power
If she so please. But if she delegate
The crown to him, or in extremity
Impose it, it is not legitimate,
Save he is crown'd by her own living hands
In presence of the Council.

(*Enter Sforza, hastily, in full armor, except the helmet.*)

SFORZA.

Ho! Rossano!

ROSSANO.

My Lord!

SFORZA.

Send quick, and summon in the Council
To see the crown imposed! Bianca dies!
My throne hangs on your speed! Fly!

(*Exit Rossano.*)

Sentry, ho!
Despatch a hundred of my swiftest horse
Tow'rd Naples! Bring me back Sarpellione!
Alive or dead, a thousand ducats for him!
Quick!

(*Exit sentinel, re-enter Rossano.*)

ROSSANO.

I have sped your orders!

(*Enter a messenger.*)

MESSENGER.

Please my Lord,
Lady Bianca prays your presence with her!

SFORZA.

Away! I'll come! (*To Rossano.*) Go, man the citadel
With my choice troops! Post them at every gate!
Send for the Milanese to scout or forage,
I care not what, so they're without the wall!
And hark, Rossano! if you hear a knell
Wail out before the coronation peal,—
Telling to Milan that Bianca's dead,
And there's no Duke—down with the ducal banner,
And, like an eagle, to the topmost tower
Up with my gonfalon! Away!

(*Re-enter the messenger from Bianca.*)

MESSENGER.

My Lord—

SFORZA.

I come! I come!

PASQUALI, (*without.*)

In, in!

(*Enter Sarpellione, followed by Pasquali.*)

SARPELLIONE, (*aghast at the sight of Sforza.*)

Alive!

SFORZA.

Ha, devil!
Have you come back to get some fresher news?
Alfonso 'd know who's Duke! While you are hanging,
I'll ride to Naples with the news myself!
Ha! ha! my star smiles on me!

(*Bianca rushes in, and crouches at the side of Sforza, as if hiding from something beyond him.*)

BIANCA.

Hark! I hear them!
Come! come! Brunorio!—If you come not quick,
My heart will break and wake him!

(*Presses her hand painfully to her side.*)

Crack not yet!
Nay, think on Sforza! Think 'tis for his love!
Giulio will be an angel up in Heaven,
And Sforza will drink glory from *my* hand!
Come! come! Brunorio! (*Screams piercingly.*)
Ah, who murder'd Giulio!
Not I!—not I! not I!

SFORZA, (*watching her with emotion.*)

Oh Heav'n! how dearly
Are bought the proudest triumphs of this world!

BIANCA.

Will the bell never peal!

PRIEST, (*to an attendant.*)

On that string only
Her mind plays truly now. Her life hangs on it!
The waiting for the bell of coronation
Is the last link that holds!

SFORZA, (*raising her.*)

My much-lov'd wife!

BIANCA.

Is it thee, Sforza? Has the bell pealed yet?

SFORZA.

Think not of that, but take some drink, Bianca!
You'll kill me this way!

BIANCA, (*dashing down the cup.*)

Think you I'll drink fire!

SFORZA.

Then taste of this! (*Offers her a pomegranate.*)

BIANCA, (*laughing bitterly.*)

I'm not a fool! I know
The fruit of Hell has ashes at the core!
Mock me some other way!

SFORZA.

My poor Bianca!

BIANCA.

Ha! ha! that's well done! You've the shape of Sforza,
And you're a devil, and can mock his voice—

But Sforza never spoke so tenderly!
You *overdo* it! Ha! ha! ha!

SFORZA.

God help me,
I would her brother had been Duke in Milan
And I his slave—so she had liv'd and lov'd me!

BIANCA.

Can you see Heaven from hence! I thought 'twas part
Of a soul's agony in Hell to see
The blest afar off? Can I not see Giulio?
(*Struggles, as if to escape something before her eyes.*)
Sforza's between!

SFORZA.

Bianca! sayst thou that?
(*Struggles with himself a moment.*)
Nay, then, 'tis time to say farewell, Ambition!
(*Turns to the Priest.*)
Look, father! I'm unskill'd in holy things,
But I have heard, the sacrifice of that
Which the repenting soul lov'd more than Heaven,
Will work a miracle.
(*Takes his sword from his scabbard, and proceeds in a deeper voice.*)
I love my sword
As never mother lov'd her rosy child!
My heart is in its hilt—my life, my soul,

Follow it like the light! Say thou dost think
If I give that up for a life of peace,
Heav'n will give back her reason—

PRIEST, (*eagerly.*)

Doubt it not!

SFORZA.

Then—take it!

(*Drops the hilt into his hand, and holds it a moment.*)

SARPELLIONE, (*in a hoarse whisper.*)

Welcome news for King Alfonso!

SFORZA, (*starting.*)

Fiend! sayst thou so! Nay then, come back, my sword.
I'll follow in its gleaming track to Naples,
If the world perish!

(*Enter Rossano.*)

Now, what news, Rossano?

ROSSANO.

In answer to your wish, the noble Council
Consent to see the crown imposed in private—
Three delegated lords will presently
Attend you here!

SFORZA, (*energetically.*)

Tell him who strikes the bell,
To look forth from his tower and watch this window!
When he shall see a handkerchief wave hence
Let him peal out. (*Attendant goes out.*)

My gonfalon shall float
Over St. Mark's before Foscari dreams
There's a new Duke in Milan! Let Alfonso
Look to the north!

(*Enter attendant.*)

ATTENDANT.

My Lord, the noble Council
Wait to come in!

(*Sforza waves his hand, and they enter.*)

FIRST LORD.

Health to the noble Sforza!

SFORZA.

My Lords, the deep calamity we suffer
Must cut off ceremony. Milan's heiress
Lies there before you, failing momently,
But holds in life to give away the crown.
If your'e content to see her put it on me
Let it be so as quickly as it may!
Give signal for the bell!

(*The handkerchief is waved and the bell peals. Bianca rises to her feet.*)

BIANCA.

It peals at last!
Where am I? Bring some wine, dear Giulio!

(*Looks round fearfully.*)

Am I awake now! I've been dreaming here
That he was dead! Oh God! a horrid dream!
Come hither, Sforza. I have dreamt a dream,
If I can tell it you—will make your hair
Stand up with horror!

SFORZA.

Tell it not!

BIANCA.

This Giulio
Was, in my dream, my brother—how I knew it
I do not now remember—but I *did!*
And lov'd him—(that you *know* must be a dream)
Better than you!

SFORZA.

What—better?

BIANCA.

Was't not strange?
Being my brother, he must have the crown!
Stay!—is my father dead—or was't i' the dream too?

SFORZA.

He's dead, Bianca!

BIANCA.

Well! you lov'd me not,
And Giulio *did*—and somehow you should hate me
If he were Duke; and so I kill'd him, *loving me,*
For you that *lov'd me not!* Is it not strange

That we can dream such things? The manner of it—
To see it in a play would break your heart—
It was so pitiless! Look here! this boy
Brings me a heap of flowers!—I'll show it you
As it was done before me in the dream!
Don't weep! 'twas but a dream—but I'll not sleep
Again till I've seen Giulio—the blood seem'd
So ghastly natural! I shall see it, Sforza,
Till I have pass'd my hand across his side!

(*Turning to the attendants.*)

Will some one call my Page?

SFORZA.

My own Bianca,
Will you not drink?

(*She drops the cup in horror.*)

BIANCA.

Just such a cup as that
Had liquid fire in't when the deed was done—
A devil mock'd me with it!

(*Another cup is brought, and she drinks.*)

This is wine!
Thank God, I wake now!

(*She turns to an attendant.*)

Will you see if Giulio
Is in the garden?

SFORZA.

Strike the bell once more.

BIANCA.

He kiss'd me ere he slept—wilt listen, Sforza?

SFORZA.

Tell me no more, sweet one!

BIANCA.

And then

The very flowers he brought me, at his feet,
To eke his body out as long as yours—
Was't not a hellish dream?

(*The bell strikes again, and she covers her ears in horror.*)

That bell! Oh Heav'n!
'Tis no dream—now I know—yes—yes—I know
These be the councillors—and you are Sforza,
And that's Rossano—and I kill'd my brother
To make you Duke! Yes, yes! I see it all!
Oh God! Oh God!

(*She covers her face, and weeps.*)

SFORZA.

My Lords, her reason rallies
Little by little. With this flood of tears,
Her brain's reliev'd, and she'll give over raving.

My wife! Bianca! If thou ever lov'dst me,
ook on my face!

BIANCA.

Oh Sforza, I have given
For thy dear love, the eyes I had to see it,
Th ears to hear it. I have broke my heart
n reaching for't.

SFORZA.

Ay—but 'tis thine *now*, sweet one!
The life-drops in my heart are less dear to me!

BIANCA.

Too late! you've crush'd the light out of a gem
You did not know the price of! Had you spoken
one kind word upon my bridal night!

SFORZA.

e, my Bianca!

BIANCA.

I am parch'd
ith thirst now, and my eyes grow faint and dim.
re you here, Sforza?—Mourn not for me long!
ut bury me with Giulio! (*Starts from him.*)
Hark! I hear
is voice now! Do the walls of Paradise
t over Hell? I heard his voice, I say!

(*Strikes off Sforza, who approaches her.*)

hand me, devil! You've the shape of one

Who upon earth had no heart! Can you take
ape but that? Can you not look like Giulio!

(Sforza falls back, struck with remorse.)

k! 'tis his low, imploring voice again—
prays for poor Bianca! And look, see you!
The portals stir! Slow, slow—and difficult!

(Creeps forward with her eyes upward.)

Pray on, my brother! Pray on, Giulio!
I come! *(Falls on her face.)*

(Sforza drops on his knee, pale and trembling.)

SFORZA.

My soul shrinks with unnatural fear!
What heard I then? "Sforza, give up thy sword!"
Was it from Heaven or Hell!

(Shrinks, as if from some spectre in the air

I will! I will!

(Holds out his sword as if to the monk, and Sarpellione, who has been straining forward to watch Bianca, springs suddenly to her side.)

SARPELLIONE.

She's dead! Ha! ha! who's Duke in Milan now?

(Sforza rises with a bound.)

SFORZA.

Sforza!

(He flies to the window, and waves the handkerchief. The bell peals out, and as he rushes to Bianca, sh

moves, lifts her head, looks wildly around, and struggles to her feet. Rossano gives her the crown—looks an instant smilingly on Sforza, and with a difficult but calm effort places it on his head. All drop on one knee to do allegiance, and as Sforza lifts himself to his loftiest height, with a look of triumph at Sarpellione, Bianca sinks dead at his feet.

[*Curtain falls.*

THE END.

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